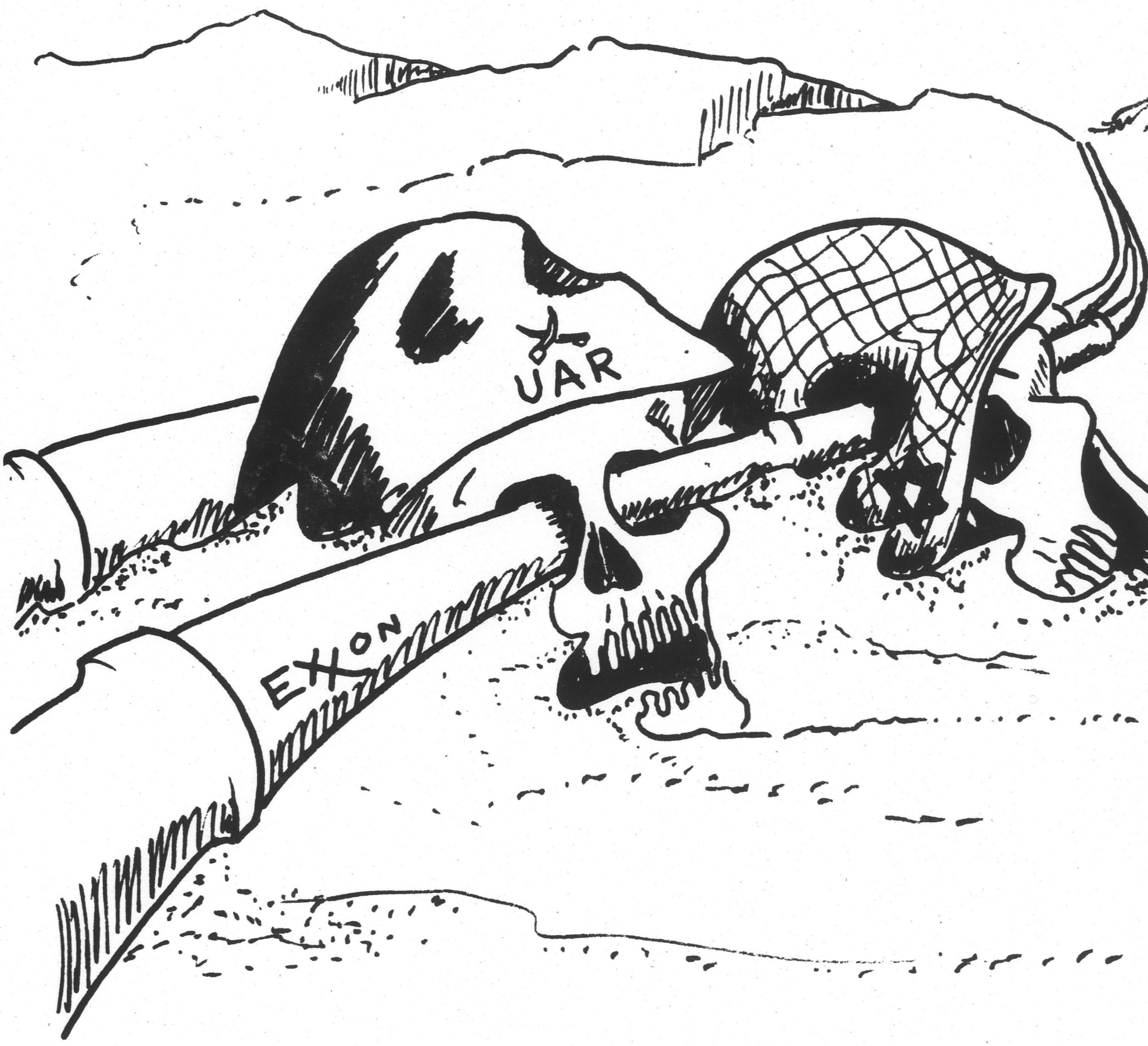
THE SOCIALIST EXPERIENCE

WAR AND THE MIDDLE EAST



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No. 1

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

IN A SERIES OF EDUCATIONAL REPRINTS DESIGNED TO BRING TO TODAY'S SOCIALISTS THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

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Hal Draper

The Origins of the Middle East Crisis

WE HAVE JUST SEEN WAR NO. 3 in the tragedy known as the Israel-Arab conflict; and we find ourselves in the position of being unable to cheer for either side in this clash of chauvinisms. At this time I am going to devote myself mainly to the myths and illusions about the Israeli side of the story, for the simple reason that it is these myths and illusions that you mainly read and hear about.

It is not possible to understand what has happened merely by looking at what happened in the last couple of weeks. Behind War No. 3 is a closely connected chain of events and issues going far back. The main link in this chain is the story of a *nation that has been destroyed.*

That sounds like an echo of what we hear all around, viz. the threat of the Arab states to destroy the state of Israel—the threat which is the hallmark of Arab chauvinism. But while this is a threat, there *was* a nation that was destroyed in Palestine—already. It is this destroyed nation whose fate has been the crux of the Middle East tragedy, for its fate has been used and is being used as a football by each side.

When I was born, there was an Arab nation in Palestine, in whose midst Jews had lived for 2000 years in relative peace. Where is this nation now, and what has been done to it? The answer is at the heart of the program which we face now.

Today the leaders of the Arab states are saying, "We aim to destroy the nation which inhabits Palestine," and they are rightly denounced for this. But toward the end of the 19th century, a movement arose which did in fact set itself the aim of destroying the nation which inhabited Palestine then; and moreover it did so. That movement was the Zionist movement.

Everyone talks nowadays about "*the* Jews" and "*the* Arabs," with doubtful justice. There are Jews and Jews, as there are Arabs and Arabs; and right now I am talking not about "the Jews," but about the Zionist movement. Israel today is run by the old men of the world Zionist movement, and it is still the Zionist ideology which rules Israeli policy. The European survivors of Hitler's death camps are not the Jews who run Israel; their terrible fate has been a tool used by the men who run Israel, so that the crimes of the Nazis have been used to deflect the attention of world public opinion from the crimes committed in Palestine.

For present purposes, there are three things to understand about this Zionist ideology, which still rules the rulers of Israel. To present the first, I quote a typical example of anti-Semitic literature:

> The converted Jew remains a Jew, no matter how much he objects to it... Jews and Jewesses endeavor in vain to obliterate their descent through conversion or intermarriage with the Indo-Germanic and Mongolian races, for the Jewish type is indestructible... Jewish noses cannot be reformed, and the black wavy hair of the Jews will not change through conversion into blond, nor can its curves be straightened out by constant combing.

There is more of the same where this comes from. Obviously from the Nazi commentary on the Nuremberg Laws, or from Streicher's *Stürmer,* or perhaps from Gerald L. K. Smith? Not at all: it is from a classic of Zionism, Moses Hess' *Rom und Jerusalem.* It is easily possible to quote pages and pages more of this same mystical blood-tribalism from the best Zionist sources, all sounding as if it came from the arsenal of the anti-Semites.

For Zionism is, first of all, a doctrine about a tribal blood-mystique which makes all Jews a single nation no matter where they live or how. It asserts that Jews are inevitably *aliens* everywhere, just as the anti-Semites say they are; and that anti-Semitism is correct in feeling this. This is the first element in Zionism.

Secondly: it follows that the Jews must reconstitute their "nation" in a state territory; but not just *any* state territory. In fact there is a point of view called "territorialism," as distinct from Zionism, which looked for the establishment of a Jewish nation in a land other than Palestine. But Zionism demands that the Jewish "nation" take over Palestine—only Palestine; and by Palestine it means the ancient Jewish state and its boundaries, *Eretz Isroel,* no less. This is what the tribal mystique demands.

Thirdly: the Zionist ideology dictates that this Jewish state must be set up not only by Jews who want to live in such a state. One of the tasks of the Zionist movement is to move *all* Jews, from all countries of the world, into Palestine, now Israel. In Zionist slang, this is called the "Ingathering of the Exiles"; for it is an article of basic faith that all Jews living outside this territory are living literally in exile, and always will merely be exiles, nothing else. It was not very many years ago that a writer in *Davar,* the organ of the Israeli ruling party, made the suggestion that a good way of uprooting all those American Jews who declined to go to Israel was to send a gang of anti-Semitic agitators there to make the ground hot under their feet so that they would move. This, of course, is not usually the course recommended on paper, as against persuasion. But how persuasion graduates into denunciation and arm-twisting was seen in the early fifties when David Ben-Gurion, on a visit to the U.S., denounced the Zionist Organization of America as traitors to Zionism because its leaders were not working actively to get the entire Jewish population of the U.S. to move to Israel. It must be understood (though Amercian Zionists systematically obfuscate it to the best of their ability) that the Israeli leaders and world Zionist leaders sincerely believe in their mission to "ingather" *all* the Jews of the world to the state of Israel, and that they have devoted their lives to this mission.

The Zionists have always been fond of saying that they are tired of the

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This article is a somewhat condensed and edited version of a talk given in Berkeley shortly after the outbreak of the Third Arab-Israeli War, dealing with the historical background of the conflict but not with the current situation, which was discussed separately. Fully detailed documentation for the material contained here may be found in a book which has just been published, *Zionism, Israel and the Arabs: The Historical Background of the Middle East Tragedy* (Berkeley, 1967), edited by myself, comprising articles from the Independent Socialist press.—H.D.

Jews being a "peculiar people," that they have been "peculiar" long enough. They want (they say) the Jews to be a people like any other, and to have a state just like any other state. In Israel, I would tell you, they have succeeded notably in *this* aim: Israel more and more has become a state like any other state. In this stridently militarist Zionist state, the current of Jewish humanism which was one of the glories of the Jewish people from Maimonides to Spinoza and after, is today represented only by a minority—a minority whose voices are rarely heard abroad, and hardly at all in the U.S.; but it is this minority which represents the only Israel with whom one can identify.

Soon after the creation of Israel the press was full of enthusiastic reports by American Jewish tourists who went to Israel and came back to relate the wonders that they saw there (and there are many to see). One that I remember most vividly was a tourist who was quoted as follows in the course of his burbling: "Why, you walk around Tel Aviv, and you know what? Even the *policemen* are Jewish!" That's true, naturally. The cops are Jewish in Israel—and they are still cops. The militarists in Israel are Jewish—and they are militarists. And the people who destroyed the Arab Palestinian nation which I mentioned were, alas, also Jewish—though I do not believe that they will go down in the annals of history alongside Maimonides and Spinoza.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THAT PALESTINIAN NATION went through four periods. The first period goes from the beginning of the Zionist movement up to World War I. This was a period of slow immigration of Jews into Palestine and of gradual land-buying. By the time it ended Jews constituted something under 10 percent of the population. Despite Zionism's profession that this was the thin edge of the wedge in its long-term aim to establish a Jewish state in the land inhabited by Arabs, it was not taken seriously enough to occasion much resistance until the second period, inaugurated by the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

It was in this period that British imperialism, taking over the area, started its decades-long policy of playing Zionists against Arabs in order to maintain its imperialist control. The Zionist leadership willingly and knowingly collaborated with the British. They knew that, at this stage, it was not they who could control the Arab people living in the land; only British imperialism could do it for them. To be sure, they were not *puppets* of the British: they were junior partners, in an enterprise in which each partner considered that it was using the other for its own ends.

This was also the period of the beginning of Arab nationalism, of an Arab national-liberation movement. This movement had every right to fight for liberation from Britain (or in other parts of the Middle East, from France). To supporters of Arab freedom, the Zionist movement could have appeared only as what it actually was: a partner of the European imperialists. It makes no difference whatsoever that the Zionists played this baneful role not out of love for Britain but in pursuit of their own expansion. The fact is that Britain used the Zionist tool to increase the number of Jewish settlers so as to play them off against the indigenous Arab population. Thus it was inevitable that Jewish immigration should appear to the Arabs as a tool of imperialist domination, for it was so.

It was therefore during the 1920s that, for pretty much the first time in Palestine, there began sporadic Arab attacks against Jewish settlers. On the one side, these were the first stirrings of an Arab national liberation movement, directed not only against the British but also against the allies of the British who were at hand, viz. Zionist infiltrators into the country. On the other hand—and here you get the typically tragic element in this story which goes through it from beginning to end—these stirrings took on strong overtones of the backward social and religious aims of the Arab movement; for progressive social elements were weak, working-class formations were incipient. But this hardly can change the fact that there was a legitimate nationalist movement under way.

The third period—which was to prove decisive to the outcome—came with the onset of the Nazis' anti-Jewish drive, first in Germany itself, and then in the course of World War II in the rest of Nazi-occupied Europe, up to the mass extermination campaign and its death camps. It should be added that, in the period immediately following the war, there was also the onset of Soviet anti-Semitism on a big scale, thereby boosting the impact of what had happened during the war.

This is the period that everyone knows about; some think it is all one has to know. But there is more to this than meets the myopic eye.

To be sure, for the Jewish remnant Europe represented burning ground: they had to get out—somehow, somewhere, anywhere. This plight of the Jewish refugees—one of the most terrible in the history of man's bestiality to man—was what dramatically captured the sympathy of everyone decent in the world; it is this that is tied up in the public mind with the exodus to Palestine. This is entirely true as far as it goes; but one has to know something else too. *This terrible plight and this great world sympathy were not enough to open the gates of a single Western country to those Jewish refugees!*

DURING THOSE YEARS WE Independent Socialists called for opening the doors of the United States to the Jewish victims of Hitlerism, those who were left. I can tell you that in this great "liberal" country, crawling with liberals, there was hardly an echo of such a notion, of opening the doors of *this* country to the poor Jews for whom everyone's heart bled—in print.

One reason for this is clear and can be easily documented. Morris Ernst, the famous civil liberties lawyer who was involved at the time, has told the story, among others: about how the leaders of the Zionist movement exerted all the influence they could muster to make sure that the U.S. did *not* open up immigration to these Jews—for the simple reason that they wanted to herd these same Jews to Palestine. This is what their Zionist ideology demanded. White Christian America was only too glad to go along with this "solution"! Who wanted a few hundred thousand miserable Jewish refugees coming into the country? Not our liberal Americans, who were so heart-stricken by Nazi brutality. Not the British, who took in an inconsequential token number. Nor anyone else. These Jewish victims were people on the planet without a visa. Liberals in this country, as elsewhere, had a convenient way of salving their

tender consciences; all they had to do was parrot the line which the Zionists industriously provided them: "They want to go only to Palestine . . ."

Now there is no point in anyone's arguing to what extent this was really true or not, or of how many it was true, because no one ever gave them the chance to decide whether they wanted to go to Palestine or to some other country that was open to them. The doors were shut against them, with the help of the whole Zionist apparatus and of other "influential" Jews who were no more enthusiastic about "flooding" the country with poor Jews than their WASP neighbors. First it was made damned sure that Palestine was the only possible haven, and then they might possibly be asked where they wanted to go, as if they had a free choice! In my eyes, this is one of the basest crimes committed by the Zionist leadership.

In this way the Jewish survivors of the Hitlerite death camps were herded toward Palestine, to keep the U.S. and other countries from being contaminated by their presence (for some) or to make sure that they were properly "in-gathered" (for others). Of course, Palestine was not really open either, being still under the control of the British, but here at least the Zionist movement was willing to go all-out to crash the gates, with heavy financing from many an American Jew who himself had no sympathy for Zionism but could be convinced that Palestine was certainly a more suitable haven than New York.

This turn brought the Zionist movement into conflict with the same British imperialism whose junior partner it had been. The partners' paths now diverged. The Jewish refugees—fleeing from a horror behind them, and rejected on all sides—became the human material the Zionists needed to carry out the goal they had set a half century before: to dispossess the Arab nation of Palestine and install a Jewish state in its stead—and to do this with the sympathy of a good deal of the world.

The Palestinian Arabs, as well as their Arab neighbors, had a very simple comment to make on this situation: "Hitler's extermination program was a great crime, but why does that mean that *we* have to give up our land to the Jews? It is the world's problem, not just ours." I should like to see someone refute this.

We must note that by this time the Zionist movement had finally come out openly with its proclaimed intention of taking Palestine away as a Jewish state. This had been done in 1942, in the so-called "Biltmore Program." (Up to then, the Zionists had used doubletalk about a "Jewish homeland" to confuse the picture.) Now that the cards were on the table, there were even some Zionists—or at least people who considered themselves to be Zionists—who were outraged. It was around this time that the Ichud was founded in Palestine by Rabbi Judah Magnes. The idea of a bi-national state in Palestine was counterposed to the official Zionist program: instead of a "Jewish state" it meant a state in which both Jews and Arabs could live peacefully and tranquilly together; but it was rejected. Instead, the Zionists said, "We are going to take the whole country"; and they did.

HERE I NEED ONLY SKETCH how this happened. After a series of doubledealing maneuvers by the great powers (particularly the U.S., Britain and Russia) which it would take too long to go into, by 1947 the United Nations decided on a partition plan. There were to be two separate states in Palestine, a Jewish state and an Arab Palestinian state. By this time, there was indeed a Jewish majority in the territory assigned to the Jewish state—something like a 60% majority—and therefore one could feel that this majority had the right to invoke the right to self-determinatoin. I might as well mention that, at that time (1948), I did myself believe and write that the Palestinian Jews had the *right* to make this mistaken choice (for, of course, a right exists only if it includes the right to make a mistake). I mention this only to make clear that I believed and wrote at that time that the attack on the new state of Israel by the Arab states was an aggression and a violation of the right to self-determination.

But at that moment Israel was still new-born, and there were different ways in which it could defend itself—in a progressive and democratic way, and in a racist and expansionist way. The answer to *that* historical question was not long in coming: it was given right away by the same Zionist leaders who were also the rulers of the new state power. From its first hour the Zionist power took the road of a reactionary and racist purge of the Arabs as such. At this point I am not talking about the foreign Arab states, but of the Arabs of Israel themselves, the great mass of whom never took up arms against Israel or aided the aggressors.

A new act in the Middle East tragedy begins here; although it is a crime smaller in magnitude than Hitler's against the Jews, it is still one of the most shameful in recent history. The Zionist rulers utilized the attack by the *foreign* Arab states to run the *Palestinian* Arabs off their land, by means of a series of laws and measures which were taken not only in 1948–49 but which went right on into the 1950s. The forty percent of the population which was Arab in the partitioned territory was reduced to about 10 percent in the new state of Israel. Immense proportions of Arab-owned land were simply robbed from them, by "legal" means. By 1954 over one-third of the Jewish population then in Israel was settled on land that had been stolen from the Palestinian Arabs. And the Arab state of Palestine which had been created by the partition never came into existence; by the end of the war, five sections of it had been grabbed by Israel and were never given up, and the West Jordan area was incorporated into the state of Jordan.

Thus the Arab nation of Palestine was destroyed, except as a discriminated-against remnant in Israel, and even the truncated Arab state of Palestine set up by partition was destroyed. I am entirely willing to denounce anyone who wants to destroy any existing state, including Israel; but some thought should be given to this recent history by those who are willing to denounce *only* the threat to destroy Israel.

The great land robbery of the Israeli Arabs was the despoiling of a whole people. It was carried out in various ways, but generally speaking the pattern was this: any Arab who had left his village during the war for any reason whatsoever was declared an "absentee" and his land was taken away by Zionist agencies. The Zionist myth has it that all these Palestinian Arabs left at the behest of the foreign Arab invaders and in cahoots with them. This is

a big lie. There was a war on, and even if they *fled from* the Arab invaders and in fear of them, and even if they fled only to a neighboring village, they became "absentees." They also fled from the British; they not only fled from the invading Arabs but also fled from the Zionist troops—the Haganah and the Irgun. This was especially true after the massacre at Deir Yassin.

Deir Yassin was the name of an Arab village in Palestine, whose people were outstandingly *hostile* to the Arab invaders. In 1948 a battalion of the Irgun (the right-wing Zionist force) attacked the village. There were no armed men in the village, and no arms. Purely for terroristic purposes, the Irgun sacked the village and massacred 250 men, women and children. One hundred fifty bodies were thrown down a well; 90 were left scattered around. This massacre was deliberately directed by the Irgun against a village known to be *friendly* to the Jews, as an example. Although the dirty job was done by the Irgun, the official-Zionist Haganah knew of the planned attack; immediately afterward the Irgun, instead of being pilloried in horror by the Zionist movement, was welcomed by the Haganah into a new pact of collaboration. (The Irgun's leader, Begin, by the way, was taken into the Israeli cabinet along with General Dayan just before the outbreak of the recent Third War.)

Of course, the Irgun was able to show the way to the Haganah because it was semi-fascist; but the Haganah leaders learned fast. Before the First War had ended the Haganah too was attacking and ousting unarmed and non-belligerent Arab villagers, although naturally not as brutally as the Irgun (since they were democrats and "socialists"). Especially after the Deir Yassin massacre, it was only necessary that any troops show up, and the Arab peasants got out of the way, as anyone else would do. They thus became "absentees," and their land was taken away by a series of laws over the next several years. *All* of the Zionist parties, from "left" to right, sanctioned this robbery. There was even a legal category known as "present absentees," who were very much present as Arab citizens of Israel but who were legally accounted to be "absentees" because they had been absent from their village on a certain date—and therefore could be legally robbed of their land. The largest portion of this stolen land went to the kibbutzim—not only the kibbutzim run by the Mapai (right-wing social democrats) but even more went to the kibbutzim of the Mapam (who claimed to be left socialists), whose leaders regularly made clear that their hearts bled for the plight of the Israeli Arabs. However, their hearts also bled for their land, even more.

Along the border areas, Palestinian Arabs were pushed over the line into the Gaza Strip, or into Jordan, and then they were shot on sight as "infiltrators" if they tried to come back. It was in ways like this—which I sketch here only briefly—that Israel's rulers created the massive Arab refugee problem. Literally they surrounded the country with a circle of hatred—*hatred which they themselves had caused*—the hatred of the despoiled Palestinian Arabs looking over from the other side of the border and seeing their own lands being tilled by strangers whom the Zionists had brought from thousands of miles away to take their place.

This robbery is not transmuted into justice just because some of these strangers were Jewish refugees from Europe against whom another crime had been committed by someone else. The Zionist agencies welcomed these despairing refugees to their new life by putting them on the marches of the hate encircled state so that they would have to defend themselves, their lives, and their stolen gifts, from the previous Arab owners. (Thus the "exiles" were not only "ingathered" but also very useful.)

Meanwhile in Israel, the 10 percent of the Palestinian Arabs left—who had not only not taken up arms but had not fled—were placed under military control like an occupied enemy people, and discriminated against in many ways. It is not without reason that they have been called the "niggers of Israel"; but as a matter of fact the American Negroes would not have taken lying down what the Israeli Arabs had to endure for two decades.

On the borders—for example, in the Gaza Strip—the dispossessed and robbed Arabs lived a wretched existence under the control of Egypt, but the Egyptians only used them for their own purposes as pawns, while keeping their help to a minimum. They were not admitted into Egypt proper. They were forced to fester there so that their misery and hatred might make them a bone in the throat of the Israelis; at the same time Israel was as little interested as Nasser in arriving at a deal for the settlement of the Arab refugee problem.

Every now and then some of the refugees would "infiltrate"—that is, slip across into Israel to visit his own land or till his own soil or try to take back his own belongings—and would be shot to death by those same Jewish policemen and guards who so delighted the heart of the Jewish tourist mentioned earlier. As a result the Israelis complained bitterly about the "infiltrators" who were so evil as to do this. The terrible situation escalated. Infiltrators began to commit acts of sabotage on the property that had been stolen from them, or struck out more blindly at the robbers. The Israelis began to resort to organized military reprisals to terrorize them into acquiescence. In 1953 there was a massacre organized by Israeli armed forces in the Arab village of Kibya. In 1955—a year that more or less marked a turning-point for the worse—there was a big attack by an organized Israeli military force on Gaza; more and more Israeli leaders oriented toward "preventive" war, since military force was their only answer to the problem created by their own crimes. This was the traditional and classic answer of the militarist and expansionist mentality; it is the same answer as was recommended by General MacArthur on how to treat Koreans and Chinese and other such "gooks"—you show them who's master—that's what they can understand, etc. The answer of the Israeli militarists was, similarly: kill and terrorize the "gooks" and "teach them a lesson" so that they won't do it again.

There were negotiations over the plight of the Arab refugees but neither side was interested in a real settlement—not the Israeli side and not the Egyptian and Arab side. For Nasser, the Arab refugees leading their wretched existence were useful tools to harass the Israelis. As for Israel, at the same time that they argued that they could not restore the land to the Arabs they had robbed, they were industriously bringing in whole Jewish populations, from Yemen and Morocco, for example (not to speak of the whole Jewish popula-

tion of the U.S. which Ben-Gurion was so vainly anxious to move to Israel). There was plenty of room in Israel for such hundreds of thousands of Jews, but in the negotiations over the Arab refugee problem there was not a *dunam* of land that could be spared. The decisive thing to remember is that, from the Zionist viewpoint, for every single despoiled Arab who would be readmitted to Israel there was a Jew who could therefore not be "ingathered."

The problem was not *how* Israel and the Arab states could have made peace; the problem was that neither side wanted to make peace, except of course on capitulatory terms. They did not then, and they do not now.

FOR NASSER, THE ISRAEL ISSUE was a pawn in the inter-Arab struggle for power. It was also a useful distraction from the internal failures of his bureaucratic-military regime, which lacked any progressive domestic program. In both Egypt and Jordan, the pressure of the refugees within the country was relieved only by pointing them outward, against Israel. As for Israel, it must be remembered that Zionism still did not rule the "Land of Israel" as the Zionist program demanded; the "Land of Israel" still included territories outside of the state of Israel. Israeli expansionism was implicit in this, and also in the fact that, if room was going to be made for the millions of "exiles" who were to be ingathered, more land was needed. In 1955 Israeli leaders (some eagerly convinced of the necessity of "preventive" war, some dragging their feet) were looking for some pretext to launch a war against Egypt and the Arab alliance. As it happened, British and French imperialism brought them to launch that aggression themselves. In 1956, openly and in the sight of the whole world, side by side with the two leading European imperialisms (of which it was once again a junior partner), Israel invaded Egypt as its partners struck at the Suez Canal.

The point is not that Nasser is or was a dove of peace, himself, as has been made clear. One of the reasons why Nasser was not in a position to give warlike substance to his blowhard threats was that he was too preoccupied with internal difficulties and too weak. But if Nasser was no dove, it is still true that Israel exposed itself to the whole world as an open aggressor in alliance with European imperialism. Every dirty expansionist plan it had been accused of turned out to be true. Even after the British and French enterprise failed, Israel fought to retain the land it had grabbed in Egypt and gave it up only after immense international pressure.

This pattern must be remembered in the light also of the way in which the recent Third War was initiated: i.e. with Nasser taking the situation to the brink, talking loudly about destroying Israel, while the Israelis went straight to the business at hand by precipitating the shooting war.

There is one other story to be told for this period—the story of a pogrom. This pogrom was directed against an Arab village in Israel named Kfar Kassem. On the day that Israel attacked Egypt in 1956, the Israeli government declared a new curfew for its Arab citizens (who, remember, were under military control anyway, even without a war). The new decree advanced the curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 p.m. Israeli officers showed up in Kfar Kassem, as well as other places, to make known the change on that day. They were told that the men had already gone out to the fields; the officers' reply was, roughly speaking, "Don't bother us with details." In the evening, when the men of the village returned from working in the fields after the new curfew hour, they were shot down in cold blood by the Israeli soldiers—for violating a curfew that had never been told them. The government admitted that 46 men were thus killed; the number wounded was not made public. The government admission applied only to Kfar Kassem but it was reliably reported that the same thing happened that day at other Arab villages. Even this much was admitted by the government only after a week had passed and the reports could no longer be hushed up. All of Israel was appalled. Some underlings were made the scapegoats.

It was clear, then, that the Zionist program of making Israel a "state like any other state" had come true: it had its own Jewish policemen, it had its own soldiers, it had its own militarists, and now it had its own pogroms.

IN 1967 THE ROAD THAT STARTED in Deir Yassin and goes through Kfar Kassem has now reached the bank of the Jordan, where Arab refugees are once again being pushed out and around by the Israelis, as they have been for the last 20 years. Is would be useful to go through the whole chapter subsequent to 1956, leading up to the Third War, but, aside from time considerations, we would only find that it is more of the same thing: the tragedy of one reactionary chauvinism versus another reactionary chauvinism.

There is an image that haunts me, about this whole tragic embroilment in the Middle East. Buck deer in the mating season will fight each other, and now and again it has happened that they will entangle their antlers and be unable to disengage. Unable to break loose, unable to win, locked in a static hopeless combat until they die and rot and their bleached bones are found by some hunter in the forest, their skeletons are grisly evidence of a tragedy which destroyed them both, ensnarled.

It may be that, in the Middle East entanglement, the Arabs, or some of the Arabs, can survive this conflict. But it is doubtful whether, in the long run, the Jews of Israel can. What the Zionists have made out of Israel is a new ghetto—a state ghetto, a ghetto with state boundaries. That's not a new life for the Jews; that is more of the old life of which the Jews have had more than their share. This generation of Zionist hawks ruling Israel is a curse. No matter how many more great military victories they win, the sea of Arab peoples ringing them cannot be eliminated from the picture, and hatred grows. It may be another decade or two before the Arab states become modernized enough to wage war effectively; and then it will take more than euphoria over military heroes to point a way for Israel.

There are some in Israel who know and say what has been said here—more who know and fewer who say—and it is to be hoped that the next generation will be more willing to listen to their kind, to the kind of Jews who represent what is best in the history of Jewish humanism and social idealism rather than those who worship the Moloch of a "state like any other state."

HAL DRAPER *is an editor of* New Politics, *and author of* Berkeley: The New Student Revolt. *His latest publication is in* As We Saw the Thirties *(University of Illinois Press,* 1967), *a collection of essays including his "The Student Movement of the Thirties: A Political History."*

By
HAL DRAPER

9
ISRAEL'S ARAB MINORITY: THE BEGINNING OF A TRAGEDY

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.—2 Samuel 1:20.

All well-wishers of Israel, including the official Zionists themselves, are accustomed to the platitude that its peace and security depend upon normal relations with the Arab world which surrounds it. Instead, there has been increasing hostility, in a vicious circle of reciprocal hatred, which threatens to embroil the region, perhaps the world, in war. It is to be feared that the outcome of the Zionist "fulfillment," so far from being the solution to the Jewish problem that was heralded by Zionism, may mean a new act in the tragedy of the Jewish people.

To break out of the vicious circle requires an attempt to win the support and friendship of the Arab masses away from and *against* the Arab rulers, from below, toward the goal of a binational state. For Israel this program begins at home: Israel will never be at peace with the surrounding Arab world, even if it makes a deal with the Colonel Nassers, as long as it is at war with its own Arab minority. This is the place to start.

The very existence of an Arab minority is shadowy in the minds of most Americans—some say, also in the minds of most Israelis—in spite of the fact that it is over one-tenth of the nation, like the Negro minority in the United States.

When the Israeli Arabs are not ignored, they are often labeled *en bloc* as "fifth-columnists" and suspect agents of the foreign Arabs who are foes of Israel; for they are all Arabs, aren't they? They are spoken of as the "remnant of the enemy defeated in 1948" in spite of the fact that they were not defeated in 1948 since they did not fight against Israel.

Israel's Arab problem, of course, goes back to the beginnings of Zionist colonization. It is not true that the Zionists came into Palestine as "agents of British imperialism" with the creation of the Mandate after the First World War. What is true is that they came as conscious junior partners of British imperialism: they would ensure continued British domination of the country, they proposed, if they were in turn given a free hand to take it over from the indigenous Arabs. Chaim Weizmann, who became Zionism's world leader and later first president of Israel as the shrewd architect of this symbiotic relationship, is quite candid about this in his autobiography.[1] It was not his fault, or that of the Zionists, if this policy foundered after 1945, when the British government under Bevin made a sharp turn to the Arabs.

The Zionist infiltration into Palestine, therefore, took place before Arab eyes as the entrance of an alien and hostile force, under the umbrella of another alien and hostile force. Unfortunately the Zionist movement and the Israel government, despite frequent bows to the ideal of Jewish-Arab friendship, have never ceased to give nourishment to this feeling.

At least ever since Dr. Weizmann blurted out in 1919 that Zionism aimed to make Palestine "as Jewish as England is English," the Arabs have feared that this aim could not be achieved without driving out or otherwise getting rid of the population that was in the way. The Zionists countered with arguments supplemented by promises and pledges. Deeds are always more important.

Today we find that, in truth, the setting up of the Zionist state coincided with a process whereby the large majority of the Palestinian Arabs found themselves separated from their land and homes. How did this happen?

1

And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers . . . to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedest not, and houses full of good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not. . . .—Deuteronomy 6: 10-11.

THIS IS THE NEAREST good starting point for an investigation of the current situation of the Arabs in Israel, as well as of the Arab refugees around Israel. It is a story enveloped in a fog of propaganda on both sides.

On November 29, 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted its resolution for the partition of Palestine. When the British Mandate ended next May, the Zionists declared the establishment of the State of Israel, and the Arab states invaded Palestine to forcibly annul the partition by aggression.

When the fighting broke out in 1948, even before May, there began a great flight and displacement of the Palestinian Arab population, a veritable exodus from their homes and farms. Out of 700,000 Arabs, there were only about 170-180,000 left within the enlarged borders of Israel when it was over.

1. Superior numbers mark reference notes, which are collected at the end of the article and give source data only. Footnotes are marked by asterisks.

SOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

The self-imposed ground rules for this article require that all important statements be documented from Zionist or pro-Zionist sources, including Israeli sources; and, in any other case, at least from sources that Zionists would recognize as being pro-Jewish rather than pro-Arab. Any exceptions or qualifications are clearly labeled in the text or reference notes, wherever the character of the source might not be immediately obvious. The sole purpose of this purely artificial limitation is to neutralize the typical Zionist's automatic reflex that any unpleasant truth about Zionism or the Israel government is by definition biased, pro-Arab, anti-Semitic, or fabricated. All sources used, therefore, are in fact biased in a pro-Israel direction, unless otherwise noted.

Where the Ichud is mentioned, it should be kept in mind that this is the only wing of the Zionist movement (a small group in Israel) which still consistently stands for Jewish-Arab cooperation.

Place names in Palestine often have variant spellings in English; hence the variation in quoted passages.—H. D.

The official Zionist version is that this flight took place in cooperation with the invading armies of the foreign Arab states. The official Israel government pamphlet *The Arabs in Israel* asserts:

> It began on the express orders of the Arab commanders and political leaders, who assured the [Palestinian Arab] people that their evacuation to the neighboring Arab countries would only be of short duration and that they would soon return in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and receive a handsome share of the booty.[2]

In addition, according to the same official version, the Palestinian Arabs had thought the invasion would be a walkaway, but when the Arab armies were defeated, "they panicked and stampeded across the frontiers. . . . Knowing what they had intended to do to their neighbors, they now expected the victorious Jews to mete out similar treatment to them."[3] A mass guilty conscience. The Jews, on the other hand, according to this same account, vainly tried to convince these Arabs to stay and keep the peace.

This official version, therefore, provides the moral and even juridical justification for three aspects of Israel policy:

(1) Israel claims little responsibility for or to the hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees from its territory who are now living across its borders in misery and seething hatred.

(2) The government used the Arab flight to justify a series of laws which have stripped these refugees, as well as many Arabs who never left Israel, or are still in Israel, of their lands, groves and property.

(3) This version of the Arab flight, with its accompanying view of Arab disloyalty, is also the justification for the maintenance, up to today and for the indefinite future, of military-government rule over the large majority of Arabs still in Israel. Eighty-five per cent of the Arab minority in Israel live under political conditions which often resemble that of a conquered enemy under army occupation by its foe. This is not exactly a help to Jewish-Arab friendship.

How important this version of the Arab flight is to the Zionists can be realized only by indicating its economic meaning. In the following summary, the legal terms "absentee property" or "abandoned" property refer to property seized from Arabs who had left their homes during the fighting for any reason:

> Of the 370 new Jewish settlements established between 1948 and the beginning of 1953, 350 were on absentee property. In 1954 more than one-third of Israel's Jewish population lived on absentee property and nearly a third of the new immigrants (250,000 people) settled in urban areas abandoned by Arabs. . . . Most of the Arab groves were taken over by the Israel Custodian of Absentee Property. . . . In 1951-52, former Arab groves produced one and a quarter million boxes of fruit, of which 400,000 were exported. Arab fruit sent abroad provided nearly 10 per cent of the country's foreign currency earnings from exports in 1951. In 1949 the olive produce from abandoned Arab groves was Israel's third largest export ranking after citrus and diamonds. . . .
>
> The CCP [UN's Conciliation Commission for Palestine] estimated that the amount of Israel's cultivable abandoned Arab land was nearly two and a half times the total area of Jewish-owned property at the end of the mandate [1948]. . . .
>
> In 1951 abandoned cultivable land included nearly 95 per cent of all Israel's olive groves. . . .[4]

The government's Custodian of Absentee Property was in 1953 "one of the largest employers in Israel, and perhaps the largest single landlord, renting over 65,000 housing and business units of Arab absentee property. . . ."[5]

This will give a preliminary idea of the role played by the flight of the Palestinian Arabs in the establishmet of the State of Israel. Much is at stake when the Zionists insist that the flight represented an act of hostility to the State of Israel.

But suppose it was only the normal reaction of people trying to get out of the way of flying bullets? Suppose it was not in cooperation with the Arab invaders, but out of fear of them? Suppose it was also out of fear of Israeli atrocities? Suppose it was also due in part to the ouster of peaceful Arabs by Israeli troops?

Let us investigate three forces at work in precipitating the flight: the Arab states' invasion; the Zionist forces, regular and irregular troops; and the British who were departing the country in bitterness in the twilight of their power.

2

> Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels . . .
> —Genesis 25: 23.

A COUPLE OF THINGS about the social structure of the Arab community in Palestine should be mentioned for background.

When the British ended the mandate and withdrew, the Jewish communities had a whole quasi-government, or shadow government, ready to take its place and carry on all essential government functions and social services. Not so the Arabs.

> When the British administration evacuated . . . there was no organized Arab body to manage the services of government essential for communal organization. With the breakdown of all functions of government necessary to maintain public law, order, and well-being—water, electricity, posts, police, education, health, sanitation, and the like—Arab morale collapsed.[6]

This provided the context, not the cause, for the flight.

Besides, mass flight was not uncommon in the history of the Middle East, in similar cases where a population had reason to fear the waging of a war over their soil.

It was not only governmental services that collapsed, but also the social structure. As we shall see, it was the Arab upper class which fled first.

> The upper class consists, as a rule, of a few great families whose members occupy key positions in the economic, professional and other occupational fields in the country. . . .
>
> It was this small but extremely wealthy and influential class which represented Arab Palestine in practically every manifestation of social, civic, economic and political life. . . . It was common knowledge that their interests were often diametrically opposed to those of the fellahin who constituted three-quarters of the Arab population of Palestine but were illiterate, inarticulate and unable to voice any opinion.[7]

This thin upper-class layer was highly nationalistic but also socially and politically reactionary. Though it did not represent the interests of the peasant masses, yet when it fled, the whole Arab community became structurally unstable. This was even more true in the Arab urban communities, like Jaffa and Haifa.

According to the official Zionist and Israeli version (for example, the government propaganda pamphlet *Arabs in Israel*) not only did the Palestine Arabs support the invasion by the foreign Arab states but, even before the May invasion, Palestine Arabs formed the majority of the bands of Arab irregulars who harassed Jewish settlements in the first months of 1948.[8] This may or may not be so, but how many such Palestine Arabs were there? On the other hand, what

was the attitude of the mass of Palestine Arabs?

Arthur Koestler, a lifelong Zionist (Revisionist) who was then in Palestine as a correspondent, writing of this early-1948 period, reports:

> Ragged strangers kept appearing in increasing numbers in Arab villages and towns. . . . As the Palestine Arabs showed little willingness to fight, most of the sniping, ambushing and guerilla warfare was done by the foreign volunteers . . . after the first serious clashes had occurred between Arabs and Jews in Tiberias . . . the heads of the two communities arranged a truce, the Arab delegates stating that the attackers of the Jewish quarter were "strangers who had forced their way into the town."[9]

The Jewish ethnologist Raphael Patai writes:

> The majority of the Israeli Moslem Arabs, however, chose not to become involved in the Arab-Jewish fights. On the Jewish side there was never any pressure exercised on them to take up arms against their own brethren; and they themselves tried hard to escape the demands of the Arab armies and guerrillas for active help or financial support.[10]

David Ben-Gurion himself, in a magazine article published at the beginning of 1948,[11] testified that

> Indeed, the vast majority of the Palestinian Arabs still refuse to join in this war despite the combined pressure of the Mufti and his gangs, of the Arab rulers and potentates who support him and of the Mandatory Power [Britain] whose policy aids and abets Arab aggression.
>
> . . . the Arab villages have in their overwhelming majority kept aloof from the struggle. Were it not for the terrorization by the Arab bands and the incitement of their British supporters, the Arab people of Palestine would have soon resumed peaceful relations with their Jewish neighbors.

This was written before the land-grab had begun. It was only later that Israeli propagandists started putting forth a different version—i.e., *after* the land-grab was under way.

In the same issue of the same Zionist organ from which we have quoted Ben-Gurion, the same picture was drawn by another Arab expert of the Zionists, Yaakov Shimoni.[12] Among other things he stresses that

> the fact remains that the bulk of the Arab population has so far kept aloof from attacks on the Jews. Up to the present, the instigators of the disorders have been unable to enlist the mass of either the fellahin or the urban Arabs. . . .

And after a detailed account of the people's reaction, he concludes:

> The hopes of the Mufti and the AHE [Arab Higher Executive] have thus far been disappointed because although they instigated and initiated the attack, they have been unable to deliver the goods: the mass of the Arab people of Palestine have failed to rise at their orders and have proved reluctant and incapable of fighting the Jews.

The interested reader can find testimony to the same effect in several other Zionist sources.[13]

Now, as mentioned, the Zionist story is that the Arab Higher Executive called on the Palestine Arabs to flee their homes, come over the border, and wait till they could return in triumph to a conquered land.* Now, if we assume for the sake of argument that it was indeed the policy of the AHE to issue this call, it still does not tell us whether or not the Palestinian Arabs did in fact heed the call. For that, the testimony we have just cited is more relevant.

*For quotes purporting to show this, see the Israel government pamphlet The Arabs in Israel (ref. n. 2), pp. 9-10. None of the quotes is from the AHE or its leaders. Another question not satisfactorily handled is why, from their own standpoint, the Arab leaders should have issued such a general sweeping call. A quite different explanation for the flight is given in the book by McDonald, first U. S. ambassador to Israel (ref. n. 26) who was and is more pro-Zionist than the Zionists, and who is undoubtedly merely retailing what he was told in Tel-Aviv in 1948 (p. 175). See also the different explanation in the propaganda book by the Revisionist Schechtman (ref. n. 8), pp. 6-7. For an Arab rebuttal of the charge, see F. A. Sayegh (official of the Arab Information Center in New York), The Palestine Refugees, Amara Press (Wash., D. C.), 1952. A pro-British historian recommends that the Zionist story about the AHE call for a mass exodus at this time "should be treated with reserve in the absence of positive evidence to corroborate it. . . ." (George Kirk, Royal Institute of International Affairs, anti-Zionist from British imperial angle, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 263).

3

> What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?—Isaiah 3: 15.

WHAT IS AGREED UPON by virtually all sides, however, is the *class differentiation* in the flight. This may also serve to explain a kernel of truth in the Zionist version of the flight.

It is to the well-to-do Arab upper class (a small minority) that part of the Zionist story *does* apply, not to the Arab masses. In the first phase of the flight—i.e., before the start of heavy fighting, also before the Deir Yassin massacre, for example—it was these elements, the rich leaders of Arab society, who fled of their own free will.

Even the Israel government propaganda pamphlet takes note of the class distinction:

> During the earlier phases of the fighting, the movement [of mass exodus] was on a small scale. Approximately 30,000 Arabs, mostly of the well-to-do classes, left for the neighboring states to await the outcome of the struggle, as they had done during the troubles of 1936-39.[14]

But this is relatively grudging admission compared to the abundant evidence on this point from Zionist sources. The *Israel Digest* in April 1949 said that "The well-to-do ones departed before May 14th in pursuance of a deliberate plan" (the plan being the AHE strategy previously quoted from the Zionist story, but the significant thing to note is that *it is here ascribed only to the few rich Arabs*) but "The poorer classes did not flee until the first month of Israel's existence. . . ."[15] According to this, the "poorer classes" did not join in the flight until *after* the Deir Yassin massacre and many other things had happened. What then happens to the now-official Zionist story of an AHE plot for a mass exodus as the justification for Israel's refugee policy, land policy, and military government over the Arab minority?

Exactly the same statement is made in the January 1949 issue of the Tel-Aviv journal *Israel & Middle East*.[16]

Yaakov Shimoni wrote a few months later that "the educated and wealthier people . . . were among the first to run away, in contrast to the poorer strata of the community. . . ."[17] As early as February 4, 1948, the British High Commissioner reported that "panic continues to increase . . . throughout the Arab middle classes, and there is a steady exodus of those who can afford to leave the country."[18]

A Zionist writer reported: "In the town it was the workers and the poor who remained, together with a thin layer of middle-class families."[19] The well-known journalist Hal Lehrman, writing in *Commentary* for December 1949, summed up:

> The imams fled from the mosques, the kadis from the courts, the doctors, the teachers, practically all the intellectuals. Only workers and peasants remained.[20]

A great understanding can be gained if one remembers that the Israeli Arab minority problem as we know it today concerns the treatment of *these workers and peasants who remained*, in spite of all.

4

> For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.—Isaiah 21: 15.

"IN SPITE OF ALL" COVERS a great deal. Even if the Arab invaders' contribution to the flight was not that given in the Zionist version (the call to an

exodus, etc.), still it played a big role. This role, however, was usually just the opposite of that which is commonly used to justify Israeli policy.

The Palestine Arab population did not flee out of sympathy with and in cooperation with the Arab invaders, but *out of fear of them and of the war*. This is easy to understand, but for the Zionists to admit this is to stamp their subsequent Arab minority policy with a certain brand.

Yet it creeps into even the Israel propaganda pamphlet which puts forward the official story; there we learn incidentally that time and again the foreign Arab commanders had to use force to prevent the local Arabs from making truces with the Israel forces.[21] It creeps into the book by the Revisionist leader Schechtman where, as a matter of fact, we get the theory (by Schechtman) that the very reason why the AHE called for a mass exodus was "to prevent the possibility of establishing normal relations between the Jewish authorities and the Arab minority; for once this occurred, it might lead to Jewish-Arab cooperation and ultimately to Arab acquiescence in the existence of Israel."[22] For a chauvinist like Schechtman, this already confesses a great deal.

Pierre van Paassen, a well-known pro-Zionist of the Christian-mystic fellow-traveling type, is anxious to prove in his book[23] that the Arabs did not flee out of fear of *Israeli* atrocities. No, he argues, they fled out of fear of being murdered by the Mufti's henchmen if they stayed and refused to cooperate. He seems quite unaware that he is giving the lie to the official Zionist version and condemning its policy.

The ardent Zionist historian Harry Sacher likewise gives us this truth: he remarks that "the Arab commandants *ordered* the Arabs on the fringes to evacuate their villages" (italics added).[24]

An Israeli writer told in 1949 of the village of Tarshiha, whose Arabs did not flee. The villagers described how Kaukji, the Syrian leader of the Arab irregulars who had undertaken guerrilla operations even before the formal invasion,

> ruled this district for several months and quickly brought it towards destruction and death. . . . One hears the same story throughout the whole of Western Galilee, in dozens of villages along the Lebanese frontier, the same tale of the despotic rule of Kaukji's brigands. They would carry people from their homes in the darkness of the night—never any questions asked. It was enough to "be on the list" on the slightest suspicion, a single word from one of the brigands. They removed them from their families to places outside the village, a few shots were heard in the darkness, and once more the population was reduced by a couple of villagers.[25]

This is hardly the description of a population which was so sympathetic to the invader that it deserves, today, to be robbed, discriminated against, and slandered as "fifth columnists" en masse.

Chaim Weizmann, speaking to U. S. Ambassador McDonald in 1948, talked "of the flight of the Arab population from Israel—a flight at times so panicky that coins were left on the tables of huts in the Arab villages. . . ."[26] This also scarcely fits the official story about a planned exodus at the call of the foreign Arabs.

5

> But this is a people robbed and spoiled; but they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?—Isaiah 42: 22-23.

A SIMILAR PICTURE EMERGES from war-news items of the time in the *Palestine Post*, semi-official Zionist English-language daily in Jerusalem. When Iraqi invading forces took over the Ramallah area, which was and is Arab, they had to proclaim martial law and a curfew—

> and the population was warned that violators would be shot at by the Iraqis. . . . Houses of Arabs who try to run away in the future will be blown up, the P. B. S. [radio] announced. Mukhtars and elders of villages in the Ramallah area were. . . threatened with severe punishment in the event of panic or chaos. [May 7, 1948.]

This is a population under foreign occupation, not a population cooperating with invaders. Or take the report on Tiberias, quoting a Jewish Agency spokesman, which appeared in the *Palestine Post* on April 21, 1948: The local Arab leaders there had always been friendly, opposed to the anti-Jewish policies of the AHE; Kaukji's irregulars had occupied their houses "against the wishes of the inhabitants"—

> A number of clashes occurred between the local and foreign Arabs, and local Arabs asked the British authorities for help to get rid of the invaders, but none was given.

Then, when the invaders were defeated by Jewish forces, they forced the local Arab families to evacuate. "This measure was meant to rouse the neighboring Arab States and induce them to send help."

In the same issue, the Zionist daily editorializes on the fact that the entire Arab population of Tiberias "were forced to leave by the Arab command. . . . In fact, the gangs were resisted as far as possible by those whose interests they had come to 'protect.'"

> The nearly five months of fighting in Palestine has proved that the Arabs of the country—the ordinary townsmen, the fellahin and the Bedu [Bedouins] of the South—have no heart in the struggle. They did not want it to begin and they have no wish for it to continue.

But many of these Arabs, forced to abandon their land, were later robbed of it through the "abandoned land" and "absentee property" laws rigged up for the purpose by the Israelis.

Or if they wound [illegible] the border in refugee camps, they became willy-nilly part of the hapless hundreds of thousands who were reviled as "enemies" and "fifth-columnists" while their property was being stolen.

How could non-hostile Arabs wind up across the border? Read, for example, a feature article in the *Palestine Post* of May 12, 1948, written sympathetically by Dorothy Bar-Adon: she describes how

> the "displaced" Arabs seeking refuge in the Emek unburden their hearts to the Jews whom they meet at roadblocks or in the fields. It is the familiar, time-worn complaint—"they," the outsiders, are responsible for all this.

And she describes how "The refugees are driven from pillar to post. There is simply no room and no food." They go to Nazareth; then despairingly have to move on to Jenin; to Beisan; nowhere can they be provided for.

> So the refugee crosses to Trans-Jordan. From here he may be deported back again. And where does one go then?

Dorothy Bar-Adon prefaces this account with the appealing remark: *"And who can understand this bewildered running better than the Jew who has been doing it on and off for a few thousand years?"*

A Revisionist-Zionist writer who minces no words about his aim of squeezing all the Arabs out of Palestine—even this chauvinist found it possible to report honestly in 1950:

> I truly sympathize with the great pain of those tens of thousands of Arabs who fled from Israel under pressure of the Mufti's bands, although they themselves wished to continue to live in neighborli-

ness with the Jews and find work and their livelihood among them. I know of villages which defended themselves with arms against the forced entry of hired Mufti soldiers, and subsequently "evacuated" the villages for fear of military courts which threatened them.[27]

He mentions about a dozen that he knows of "personally."

Or take the case of the Jawarish (or Arab el-Guarish) tribe, as it came to light after they were finally resettled. This tribe had been such firm allies of the Zionist colonizers that they had been trusted to guard the Jewish settlements at Gedera; they had helped Jews get around British regulations and Arab hostility against Jewish purchase of land by lending their own names for the deals. Yet, when the fighting began, they had to flee simply to live, winding up in one of the refugee camps of the Gaza strip.[28] They were not repatriated until years later —even these Arabs, who were quislings from the point of view of the nationalists—and even they never got their own land back, but were resettled on new land provided by the state with a well-publicized ceremony in 1953.

Perhaps the most notable case of a tribe that was friendly to and supported the Jews, but which fled across the border during the fighting, was that of the village of Abu Gosh, which we will not document here since it is a longer and more important story which will fit better into a subsequent article on Israel's Arabs since 1948.

But in most cases it did not matter whether Arabs were friendly or hostile; it did not matter why they had to flee; it did not matter whether their flight was due to fear of the foreign Arab "liberators" or of Israeli atrocities like Deir Yassin; many were impartially stripped of their land and property, or relegated to the miserable refugee camps if that was where they landed, or subjected to military rule inside Israel—on the pretext that they had fled in order to answer the call of Israel's enemies!

6

Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.—Psalms 44: 14.

IF THE FOREIGN ARAB invaders are the first force to be considered that precipitated the flight, then the second that must be taken up is the British.

The attitude of the British imperial power in giving up the mandate was a vicious snarl of spite: "We wash our hands of this mess, and may you all bog down in it. . . ." And if the resulting disordered tangle were to become bad enough, who knows but that the British might be called back? They were not sorry to see themselves followed by chaos. And more than one observer has charged that they helped chaos along a bit.

The sharpest indictment of the British role as a precipitant of the Arab flight was made by E. N. Koussa, a prominent Israeli Arab attorney, in a letter to the *Palestine Post* of February 2, 1949.* Koussa testifies how the British authorities, before departure, encouraged and often initiated Arab evacuation, worked "to create an atmosphere permeated with fear and alarm," etc. "When conditions in Tiberias, where the friendly relations between Arabs and Jews formed a bright illustration of the possibility of the two communities cooperating, became acute, the British authorities forcibly transported the Arab inhabitants en masse to Transjordan," he charged (as quoted by Schechtman).

The Greek Catholic bishop of Haifa, Msgr. Hakim, also ascribed much responsibility to the British.[29] A World Jewish Congress leader, N. Barou, wrote that the British helped the flight along "by spreading atrocity stories. . . . They also provided transport, convoys, etc."[30] and he repeats the accusation about Tiberias. When British authorities told Arabs (in Haifa, for example) that the Jews would cut them to pieces if they stayed,[31] some may really have thought so or they may have been motivated by guile, but in either case our own investigation has only the following question before it:

Insofar as the British role was a factor in causing the flight, how can one justify the draconic punishments imposed by Israel on the Arab minority as well as the refugees for what was not their own doing? How in good conscience can even the paid Israeli propagandists claim that the harsh refugee policy, or the land-grab, or the military government, is justified because these Arabs who were displaced were "enemies of Israel"?

7

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.—1 Samuel 15: 3.

ALL THIS MIGHT BE enough in itself to confute the Zionist version; but when we find further that the Zionist-Israeli forces themselves played a prominent role in causing and intensifying the flight, then a darker and more sinister shadow falls over the harsh penalties which they later imposed on the Arab victims of their own actions.

The first sector of this question concerns the Zionist terrorist group, the Irgun Zvei Leumi, the military outgrowth of the Revisionist wing of Zionism—i.e., the most chauvinistic, most anti-Arab, most reactionary wing, which shaded into fascist tendencies (today organized in Israel in the Herut party, now the second strongest in the country). These extreme chauvinists always had, as compared with the other Zionists, the most consistent perspective of a Palestine which would not only be "as Jewish as England is English," but which would also be as *Araberrein* as Hitler wanted Germany to be *Judenrein*.

From early in the fighting, it seems clear, the Irgun oriented toward utilizing the war to achieve this objective, well in advance of the official Zionists' uneasy drift toward this same end. They struck their big blow on April 9, 1948 against Deir Yassin, an Arab village near Jerusalem on the highway to Tel-Aviv.*

Why against Deir Yassin? The distinguished British Zionist editor Jon Kimche writes:

Dir Yassin was one of the few Arab villages whose inhabitants had refused permission for foreign Arab volunteers to use it as a base of operations against the Jewish life-line into Jerusalem; they had on occasions collaborated with the Jewish Agency.[32]

Deir Yassin had to be the victim *because* its Arabs were friendly with the Jews. In *Labor Action* Al and Ed Findley gave more details culled from the Jewish press:

It was the only village in the Jerusalem area that had not appealed to any Arab authority as being in danger from the

*Although Koussa is Arab (Christian, not Moslem), it is within my ground rules to cite him here because, on this matter, he is also cited as an approved authority by the Revisionist propagandist J. B. Schechtman (ref. n. 8), pp. 12-13, and by Barou (see ref. n. 30). The same applies to Msgr. Hakim. I may add also that Koussa, who is perhaps the leading Israeli Arab defending his people's rights within the state as a loyal citizen, is a collaborator with the Ichud and its organ Ner.

*According to the Bulletin of the Council on Jewish-Arab Cooperation (a then-existing U. S. group based on Ichud's type of Zionist ideology), as quoted in Labor Action Aug. 23, 1948, the terrorists worked up to it during the preceding days: "On April 4 Irgun Zvei Leumi stole 1000 head of cattle from Arab villages in the coastal plain; Haganah pursued them and succeeded in returning part of the loot to the Arabs. On April 5 terrorists hijacked an Arab truck laden with citrus fruit. On April 6 the Stern group blew up the deserted Arab village of Bir Adas, when the Arabs began to return by day to work in their fields."

Jews. The villagers lived under an agreement of non-agression with Jewish settlements surrounding it. In the winter of 1947 (long before the Dir Yassin massacre in April 1948) Abba Hushi, Jewish labor leader, cited a number of Arab villages in which the villagers had fought off Arab bands attempting to infiltrate and occupy them as positions against the Jews. Dir Yassin was prominently noted. Its villagers had successfully repelled an armed Arab band which attempted to entrench itself in the village mill. These Arab villagers . . . faithfully carried out their obligation to exclude strangers and to maintain peaceful relations, despite the partition fighting. . . .[33]

This was the village chosen by the Irgun for their planned massacre of (writes Kimche) "some 250 innocent Arabs, among them more than a hundred women and children."[34] The International Red Cross representative who visited the scene of the outrage, Jacques de Reynier, reported that the bodies of some 150 men, women and children had been thrown down a cistern while some 90 other bodies were scattered about.[35] The houses were destroyed. The few villagers who were not slaughtered were paraded by the Irgun through the streets of Jerusalem—in triumph.

Deir Yassin resounded through the land, indeed through the world, and with the desired effect. Even a record of friendship for the Jews was no protection, no insurance. It was after this that the Arab flight became general.

There is no question about the fact that there were also atrocities committed by the Kaukji and Mufti armed forces against Jews; the invaders had their Deir Yassins too, even if on a smaller scale. There is an abundance of testimony on this. But this would be relevant only in a debate on a subject which is not ours: namely, which side was worse in the Palestine war?

8

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. Proverbs 30: 20.

BUT DIDN'T THE JEWISH AGENCY condemn the Deir Yassin massacre and apologize for it? It did. Even if that were the whole story, few people would wonder why the mass of Arabs, already confused and panicked by Arab invaders and British, decided that flight held greater safety than trusting in the regrets of Ben-Gurion. But there are two other facets to this story.

(1) The official-Zionist army, Haganah, repudiated the massacre, undoubtedly sincerely, but also went on to claim that the Irgun had attacked Deir Yassin without any military justification and without the agreement of the official forces. The Irgun countered by releasing the exact text of the letter from the regional Haganah commander agreeing to the attack (not to a massacre, of course).[36] This has not really been refuted. The friendly village was not supposed to be turned into an abattoir, naturally, but it *was* supposed to be assaulted and invested as a military operation, in cynical violation of any non-aggression obligation to it.*

(2) The official-Zionists righteously deplored and condemned—but did absolutely nothing to take any effective steps against the repetition of Irgun atrocities. On the contrary, the relations between the official Zionists and the Irgun were now closer than ever.

Only seven months before, on September 18, 1947, the Haganah had raked the Irgun and Sternists with the denunciation: "these organizations gain their livelihood by gangsterism, smuggling, large-scale drug traffic, armed robbery, organizing the black market, and thefts;" and announced measures to root out terrorism.[37] But partition changed all that in November. By December the Haganah had overcome its moral sensibilities and was negotiating with Irgun for an agreement on cooperation. *Such an agreement was reached in April, the very month of the Deir Yassin massacre.*

The prominent Zionist historian Harry Sacher uneasily limits his comment on this to:

> . . . much is still obscure as to the relations between the Haganah or the Government and the Irgun. For comprehensible reasons the Government does not think the time yet come to tell its story fully and frankly. . . .[38]

Among the obscure relations is undoubtedly the role of the other official-Zionist armed force, the Palmach. The *Palestine Post* reported four days after the massacre:

> The Haganah statement denied IZL [Irgun] claims that Palmach units had cooperated in the attack, and pointed out that it was only after urgent appeals for help that the Palmach had provided covering fire, to enable the administration of first aid to the wounded dissidents [Irgunists] in the village. [April 13, 1948.]

It is not easy to see what, according to the official story, the Palmach was doing there in the first place.

So it is not quite true that the Deir Yassin massacre was *simply* the uncontrollable act of mavericks for whom the official Zionists were not responsible, as it is represented by all good Zionist writers who duly express their horror at it. They do not express any horror at the idea that the government and Haganah at this time made their alliance with these perpetrators of this "Lidice," and continued it. (It was not Arab-exterminationism which moved them to break with the terrorists; it was the assassination five months later of the UN mediator, Count Bernadotte, by Sternists.)

9

Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?—Genesis 31: 14.

THE DEIR YASSIN MASSACRE "was a turning point," says Sacher quite accurately. The foreign Arab invaders trumpeted its horror far and wide, no doubt with the aim of stimulating anti-Israel militancy on the part of the anti-war Palestine population; the actual result of their propaganda was to convince all strata, poor as well as rich Arabs, that the best thing to do was to get out of the war zone—to flee until the hostilities were over.

The massive effect of Deir Yassin on the flight is testified to from all sides.[39] The flight for the first time became general. The matter of chronology is very important; for it proves that the flight cannot be explained away as due to some previous call by the Arab invaders, as is done by Zionist party-liners and the official history-rewriters of Israel.

Another thing has to be noted about the impact of Deir Yassin. Like others we have used the term "official Zionists" as distinct from the terrorists. But this was the month *before* the establishment of the state. As far as the Arab people knew, was the Irgun really less "official" than the Haganah?

Jon Kimche's book provides an important bit of background here. He explains at length how the Irgun set about convincing the British, the world press and the Arabs that it, not Haganah, was the decisive power

*For example, at the time the Palestine Post (Apr. 12, 1948) editorialized that "No good reason can be given even for the action as a military operation"—i.e., even aside from the massacre aspect. It went on to say that the Irgun "scored a cheap victory, 'capturing' a village which was peaceable and constituted no menace, even if some few Iraqis or other armed Arabs were in it against the wishes of its inhabitants."

in the Zionist community, that it was "taking over," etc. The British passed this on to the Arab governments.

It had the desired effect among the Arabs. It swayed many who had been hesitating on the brink of decision, whether to flout the United Nations and go to war against the Palestine Zionists or not. For though it has become a habit among Israelis and pro-Zionists to assume that there was nothing but evil hatred behind the Arab decision to go to war against Israel, and that the Arab explanation that they came to save their brethren from attack by the terrorists was a cheap excuse for the benefit of those who cared to believe it, it must be stressed that there was great and very real Arab concern for the fate of the Palestine Arabs. This concern reached fever-heat when the British information was passed on that the terrorists were becoming the decisive factor in the Jewish armed forces.[40]

Kimche notes that this belief was reinforced when the Irgun took it upon itself in April to attack Jaffa, the Arab twin city to Tel-Aviv.

10

Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!—Habakkuk 2: 12.

DEIR YASSIN WAS FRESH in the minds of all when later in April the Zionist forces got ready to attack the Arab city and port of Haifa in anticipation of the withdrawal of the British troops. The Haifa situation requires special attention because it is the big show-piece for the Zionist contention that, far from pushing the Arabs out, the Jews pleaded with them to stay. As in some other cases, there is a kernel of truth here which the Zionist apologists pretend is the whole story.

Menachem Begin, the Irgun commander, stresses in his book that the effect of Deir Yassin was decisive for the flight from Haifa:

The legend of Dir Yassin helped us in particular in the saving of Tiberias and the conquest of Haifa. . . . [And after describing the assault on Haifa:] All the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter. The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting: "Dir Yassin!"[41]

In this period there were indeed cases where official Zionists tried to persuade the Arabs not to flee. Haifa was one of these;* in this commercial city Jewish-Arab relations had been particularly friendly. It was the terrorists and their chauvinist ilk who realized earlier than the others that the Zionists had an exceptional opportunity to "solve the Arab problem" within the Jewish state-to-be by the expedient of getting rid of the Arabs themselves. Friendly relations stood in the way of this aim. Hence the year before, in this very port city, the Irgun had tried out a "Deir Yassin" on a small scale:

The Irgun picked an area in Haifa that was known for friendly Jewish-Arab relations and threw a bomb at the entrance of a factory employing 1800 Arabs and 400 Jews, killing six Arabs and three British workers. Their provocative act resulted in the massacre of 42 Jews.[42]

As we have seen, the Arab Higher Executive too reserved its choicest hatred for those Arabs who tried to maintain friendly relations with the Jews. In the middle was the Arab leadership of the Haifa community, who opposed the AHE and wanted to make a truce with the Zionist authorities.[43]

If there was an Arab community in Palestine that had no sympathy at all for the war against Israel, it was the Haifa Arabs, who stood to lose—were indeed losing—their whole livelihood and existence. Their evacuation of the city was due to threats from the Arab invaders and panic fear evoked by the Irgun atrocity, reinforced and encouraged by the British.[44]

*Zionist sources like to quote the British police reports on Haifa: "Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay. . . ." See Schechtman (ref. n. 8), pp. 7-8. In M. Pearlman's The Army of Israel, these British reports are reproduced in facsimile. The effort is to make it appear as if this applied to the Arab flight in general.

This feeling of panic was also reinforced by the tactics of the beleaguering Haganah, in spite of the fact that Zionist authorities urged the populace to stay. This was a species of psychological warfare waged against the population with the intention of producing demoralization. Koestler insists that this demoralization was an important reason for the Haifa flight, and furthermore:

By that time Haganah was using not only its radio station, but also loudspeaker vans which blared their sinister news from the vicinity of the Arab shuks. They warned the Arab population to keep clear of the billets of the foreign mercenaries who had infiltrated into the town, *warned them to send thier women and children away* before the new contingents of savage Iraqis arrived, promised them safe conducts and escorts to Arab territory, and hinted at terrible consequences if their warnings were disregarded. [Italics added.][45]

Kimche, who was there, also describes the "psychological blitz" launched on the Arab quarters, and concludes: "The Arab nerve broke shortly after dark, and the flight from the town assumed panic proportions even before general fighting had started."[46] (He does not say anything about a warning to send away the women and children.) It was particularly after this that the Jews tried to persuade the remaining Arabs to stay. The latter were anxious to agree and come to a truce, but, according to Kimche's personal account, it was the threats of the Arab League authorities which finally convinced the Haifa Arabs that flight would be safer. Only 5000 remained out of about 65,000. But though they had left in a panic, there was a strangely unpanicky atmosphere in the port area. The departing Arabs meekly allowed themselves to be searched by the Haganah. They exchanged greetings and farewells with Jewish port workers, with many of whom they had worked for years.[47]

These are among the Arabs whose flight, according to the latter-day Zionist hack version, was due to sinister enmity against the Jews.

Whatever weight anyone chooses to give to the various cruel pressures on these Arabs pushing them toward flight, not one of the real reasons for the flight justifies the later merciless Israeli punishment of these victims, for the "crime" of fleeing.

Moreover, in the case of Jaffa, there were two additonal factors: (1) As mentioned, this attack was launched by the Irgun itself, the very perpetrators of Deir Yassin; and (2) "The desire to get out of the range of Arab bombs which were soon to fall on Tel-Aviv was as potent an incentive as the fear of the Jews," explains a Zionist writer.[48]

11

By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land . . . for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. . . . They shall not dwell in thy land. . . . —Exodus 23: 30-33.

BUT THE BLACKEST PART of the true story is still to come. It was only in the first period that it was official Zionist policy to frown on the flight. They were still under the influence of the lip-service which they had been used to giving to the idea of Jewish-Arab friendship; the flight had been unexpected; but they were not too slow in reorienting. Within three months after Deir Yassin, the official Haganah forces themselves were driving the Palestine Arab population

out of their native villages, towns and cities, like cattle.

Referring to the flight, "Dr. Weizmann . . . spoke to me emotionally of this 'miraculous simplification of Israel's tasks'. . ." reported U. S. Ambassador McDonald (an active Zionist propagandist) in his book.[49] The flight was greeted as a "miracle" by more than Weizmann; and like other pious people, they had no objection to helping the miracle along..

By August 1, Foreign Minister Sharett was saying that "the Palestinian Arab exodus of 1948 is one of those cataclysmic phenomena which, according to the experience of other countries, changes the course of history." While Israeli soldiers were driving innocent Arabs out of their homes, the government was already making clear that it would be a long while before any of the refugees were allowed back.

The New York *Herald Tribune's* war correspondent Kenneth Bilby, in a book remarkable for the general impartiality of its tone, says, after relating that at Haifa the Zionists urged the people to stay:

> Not until the war had swung noticeably in favor of the Jews and the pressure of the Jewish immigrant inflow had begun to exert itself did Israeli government policy change. Then those civilian Arabs who fell into the army net were not only permitted to depart: they were encouraged. And the borders of Israel closed to the refugees, except for a few family categories.[50]

Likewise Jon Kimche, in the British Zionist organ which he edits:

> But after the first period of fighting, the Palestine Arabs were no longer encouraged to stay; on the contrary: they were "encouraged" to leave Lydda and Ramleh, and later, towns like Beersheba.[51]

The quote-marks around "encouraged" give way to a franker formulation in Kimche's book:

> Ramleh and Lydda fell on the 13th [July]; and a flood of 60,000 panicky Arabs were compelled to take the road to the nearby Arab lines. This was no Haifa. The Jews no longer hoped the Arabs would stay. They had tasted the benefits which the earlier Arab policy of evacuation had bestowed upon them.[52]

Which means that the 60,000 people were expelled. There had not even been a pitched battle with Arab forces (let alone the civilians), because the Arab Legion had withdrawn without a fight. The people were simply driven out, to make the towns *Araberrein* and provide property for incoming Jews to expand into. Among the people expelled were refugees from Haifa and Jaffa. This was done by the Haganah, not by Irgun.*

But although the Arab Legion had already withdrawn, here is Bilby's description of how the Israeli troops entered Lydda. It is the only such passage in Bilby's book, which has been favorably cited by Zionists as source to disprove *other* Arab charges of atrocities:

> The ring around the twin cities [Lydda and Ramleh] was now complete.
>
> At dusk one evening an Israeli jeep column took off from the Lydda airport and raced into Lydda, with rifles, Stens, and submachine guns blazing. It coursed through the main streets, blasting at everything that moved. The town toppled in panic. I went into Lydda the following day with Major Yeruham Cohen, brigade intelligence officer, and the corpses of Arab men, women, and even children were strewn about the streets in the wake of this ruthlessly brilliant charge. Civilians who had been trapped by the Jewish encirclement cowered behind shuttered windows; white flags were draped from every home.[53]

*Kirk (see fn. on p. 90) adds that expulsions also took place of the Arab population of Acre, Beersheba and Western Galilee (p. 264). The UN Mediator, Count Bernadotte, in July 1948 reported to the Security Council on Israel's expulsion of 8000 Arab inhabitants of three villages south of Haifa and the destruction of their homes.

The reader must keep in mind that many Arab inhabitants who survived the submachine guns, and were merely driven out onto the open road, are among those who were punished for becoming "absentees" by laws which stripped them of their "abandoned" property.

In 1949 Hal Lehrman wrote in *Commentary* (December):

> Now that I've traveled every corner of this country [Israel], it has become clear that the Israeli troops must have been decidedly tough even with non-combatant Arabs during the war. There are, for instance, too many dynamited, desolated native villages where little or no fighting ever occurred. The Jews simply came in and smashed the place, often sparing only the mosques . . . it is obvious, too, that the Israelis—themselves surprised by the scope and speed of the Arab exodus—did an extra-thorough job of destruction to make sure that the Arabs would have nothing to come back to. There is no evidence that this was official government policy, but it certainly must have been in the minds of many local commanders. . . . Looting was not too zealously repressed either. No less an authority than the present Speaker of the Knesset, Joseph Sprintzak, has been quoted as saying that the looting of Arab homes and shops was a major defeat for the new government of Israel.

Then, after referring to the Deir Yassin massacre, Lehrman asks "Were there other outrages?" and quotes a UN observer as saying yes.* And he continues:

> I am more shaken by the expressions of grief and shame I have privately received from non-political but prominent Israelis whose personal integrity is beyond question. "The Israeli soldier has looted, burned, and slaughtered," I have been told, "and it is no comfort for us that soldiers of every other army do likewise." It is even [illegible] that certain officers actually ordered their troops to let themselves go. The best evidence that there were atrocities—and, I suppose, the best apology for them, if such things can be apologized for—came to me from a high-ranking veteran of the Jerusalem siege. "Our soldiers," he said, "were no worse than the Americans or British. They were even better. . . ."

*Arab sources charge other massacres (by Haganah), though none as bad as Deir Yassin: e.g., at Nasr-el-Din. Regarding this village, see Palestine Post Apr. 13, 1948 for the official Zionist report, which says that "Before the Haganah counterattacked, the women, children and older inhabitants were warned to leave the place." It does not go on to say what happened to them. The next day the same paper reported, without comment, the charge by the British colonel in the area (Tiberias) that "twenty Arabs, including women and children, were killed and the houses set on fire." The Ichud's organ Ner has stated that one cause of the Arab flight was "the Jewish leaders, who took advantage of Dir Yassin and similar deeds, not all perpetrated by 'dissident' (Jewish) forces, to spread terror among the Arab masses and to drive them away." (May 1954, as published in Freeland, May-July 1954. Emphasis added.)

But the question we are interested in here is not the moral superiority of the Haganah looters and perpetrators of atrocities over Americans or British, or vice versa, but in a far simpler one: Many Arab peasants against whom the looting and atrocities were committed, and who were driven out or who fled in fright, were later robbed of property and land and had a military government imposed over them *because* they fled or were driven out—i.e., because they left their habitations as a result of or in fear of such atrocities—and this was done not by Haganah soldiers but by the parliament and government of Israel. This was the real atrocity.

12

> My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.—1 Kings 12: 14.

BESIDES, THE LOOTING WAS not mere looting for its own sake; at least in part it was committed in the Zionist cause; that is, as a means of driving out the Arabs. Jon Kimche explains with heavy heart, in his book, speaking of the Haganah and the Jewish Agency:

> . . . the Irgun practice of looting Arab homes and shops was soon explained

away and later justified as ministering to the needs of Jewish evacuees who had lost their homes and their all as a result of the four months of attack from Jaffa. It was perhaps natural, though it was certainly detestable, that before long the rest of the Jewish soldiers of the Haganah and the Palmach should join in the orgy of looting and wanton destruction which hangs like a black pall over almost all the Jewish military successes. It could have been stopped by firm action at the outset. But it soon became a practice for which there was always a material incentive, a sophisticated justification, and an excuse.[54]

The fact that the "detestable" practice was initiated by the Irgun is significant. Irgun was the arm of a movement which consciously and systematically aimed at making Palestine *Araberrein*. Looting and "*wanton* destruction" was a political means. As in so many other cases, the Revisionist-Irgun-Herut movement showed the way to consistent Zionist practice, and the official Zionists followed with more or less reluctance, consistency and heartburning.

But it would be a mistake to think that the ousting of Arabs by official Israeli forces was a matter only of massacres or unofficial looting. The strange thing about the official-Zionist version of the flight is that one of the most important contributions of the Israelis to the ousting of Arab peasants was—in 1948—public, overt, and reported in the Zionist press as military news. This was the dynamiting of villages, and evacuation of their population, on grounds or pretext of military necessity, when foreign Arab invaders had used or might use them for a base. There is also involved the barbarous practice, introduced by the British, of collective punishments for a whole village in case of sniping.

Thus Arthur Koestler recorded in his diary on June 6, 1948 as he drove along the road from Haifa to Tel-Aviv, observing some peaceful Arabs still tilling their fields:

> But not for long. A few weeks later some Arab lads will start sniping from these villages at Jewish trucks on the road; the Jewish army will herd the villagers together, dynamite their houses, and put the young men into concentration camps; while the old ones will tie a mattress and a brass coffeepot on the donkey, the old women will walk ahead leading the donkey by the rein and the old man will ride on it. . . .[55]

At this point, the official Zionist apologist will inform us that this is military necessity, and cannot be helped. Before commenting, let us see some more military necessities. We quote from the military news published as a matter of course by the *Palestine Post* in 1948:

> . . . Kolonia village overlooking Motza was destroyed by a Haganah striking force. . . . Most of the houses in Kolonia, occupied by Arab gangs [Kaukji's foreign Arab guerrillas] that had been attacking Castel, were blown up on Saturday night, and in a short but sharp fight the Arab unit in the village was wiped out. . . . *Yesterday, Haganah men completed the destruction of the village by blowing up the remaining houses.* . . . The village had been evacuated by most of its residents during the past week. . . . [April 12, 1948. Italics added.]

The next day the paper reported, in a similar news item, that three villages had been "pounded into desolation" and "reduced to rubble" after being deserted by their residents and occupied by "Arab gangs." It adds matter-of-factly:

> Abu Shusha village . . . was recaptured by the Haganah this morning, and is being blown up. [April 13, 1948.]

The fact is, then, that Arab villages were systematically dynamited and razed not, or not merely, in the course of fighting but *after capture*. The military necessity was presumably to prevent their use by hostile forces. No doubt, the system of destroying these villages down to their foundation stones had a real convenience for the Israeli forces from this point of view, though other civilized armies seem to have gotten along in various wars without this practice. For present purposes we will also assume for a moment that the Zionist authorities never gave a moment's thought to the fact that this convenient custom had the additional advantage of scorching the earth for the Arab inhabitants and contributing to the "purity" of an *Araberrein* Palestine. We only ask readers to remember, once again, that even if we accept the plea of military necessity at face value, the question which is at issue in this study is the subsequent fate of the innocent Arab peasants who were driven out and despoiled out of this alleged military necessity, and not because of their alleged offense in taking flight at the call of the Arab invaders.

But it would take great willpower to convince oneself that military necessity was the answer. Kenneth Bilby wrote, for example, summing up the 1949 picture:

> Israel ruled three-quarters of Palestine, and scores of Arab villages deemed uninhabitable had been razed *as insurance against their owners' return.* [Italics added.][56]

Harry Sacher, a prominent British Zionist leader, is very delicate in the following remarks:

> . . . for strategic purposes the Jews began to blow up the Arab villages, which they occupied. . . . The massacre at Deir Yassin by the Irgun on the 9th April, 1948, was a turning point. . . . It became the rule that, when the Jewish forces advanced, the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territory fled; *nor was the flight always without stimulation or encouragement from the Jews.* [Italics added.][57]

An internationally known professor and author at Hebrew University, Norman Bentwich, remarks regarding the injustice of the later Absentee Property Law:

> Many [Arab residents of Israel] were driven out for a time from their villages by the Jewish military forces in the course of the campaign, and are now living in adjacent villages, and are prevented from recovering their properties which are vested in the Custodian.[58]

Hal Lehrman—writing about an entirely different topic, the widespread prejudice by Israeli Jews against the new immigrant Oriental Jews—quotes an Israeli friend who complained to him, "not entirely in sour jest, that 'we drove out our good Arabs, and now look at what we have in their place!' "[59] The alleged half-jest is about the Oriental Jews; the remark which slips out incidentally about having driven out the Arabs is *not* part of the sour jest.

> And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?—2 Kings 9: 22.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, the infamous land-grab, which after the war was carried through systematically by special laws and ordinances, got started during the war itself under the umbrella of military operations. Dr. Don Peretz writes:

> When Israel's military and paramilitary forces first occupied abandoned Arab areas military field commanders improvised policy on the spot, often turning property over to the secretaries of Jewish agricultural settlements or local security officers.[60]

In a series of articles on Israel's Arabs which appeared in the leading Israeli paper *Haaretz*, we read that

Every piece of land which had been abandoned for any reason whatever—whether in the whirl of war, or during the truces, or soon after the Israeli occupation—was at once seized by the nearby [Jewish] settlement or settlements and attached to their estates.[61]

This grab was not a matter of individual lawlessness merely; it was organized and stimulated by Zionist authorities for Zionist aims. Dr. Don Peretz describes it for this period:

Squatters [on seized Arab property] often received semi-official sanction for their occupation of empty buildings. Even before the status of the abandoned Arab areas was determined, the Jewish Agency was directing the flow of new immigrants toward the vacant Arab settlements. The military also participated in this unauthorized mass-requisitioning. In one instance, a group of army officers supported by tanks seized large areas of absentee [Arab] property in Jaffa. [Peretz's footnote here refers to the January 9, 1949 issue of *Haaretz*.]

When the first Custodian of Abandoned Property was appointed, in July 1948, all of Jaffa had been occupied. . . .

In one of his early reports the Custodian claimed that nearly all absentee houses had been occupied and that their seizure by the Jewish Agency for the use of new immigrants would be recognized. Nearly all movables in these houses, which had not been looted or destroyed, were sold to the army before the Custodian arrived.[62]

The role of the Jewish Agency in this grab was attested to in November 1949 when Finance Minister Kaplan (the cabinet member in charge) made a Knesset speech replying to charges of government laxness. He "accused institutions like the Jewish Agency, which were responsible for the settlement of new immigrants, of causing the greatest difficulties in management of absentee property."[63]

At this time, the callous robbery of the Arabs was not yet being justified officially by reference to the needs of the new immigrants. The conception had not yet taken root in all circles that the injustices and crimes committed against European Jewry by bestial anti-Semites were sufficient reason for the wronged Jews in turn to commit injustices and crimes against the native Palestinian Arab population. It was being *done,* but only officially-unofficially. When the first Custodian made his report to the Knesset, such robbery was condemned at least in words, though nothing whatsoever was done against it. The government washed its hands; so did Haganah.

In his April 18, 1949 report to the Knesset Finance Committee, the Custodian maintained that the "moral feelings" of the Jewish community had "prevented the despoliation of the enemy," but he did admit this much:

Feelings of revenge, moral justification and material temption did, however, overcome many.

In such conditions, only extreme measures by the military, civil and legal authorities could have saved, not only the property, but many individuals and institutions from moral degeneration.

Such action was not forthcoming and was, perhaps, impossible in the prevailing conditions, and affairs in many areas degenerated without restraint.[64]

Note that this official lists "material temptation"—i.e., looting for the sake of the loot—only third; and note his reference not only to individuals but to "institutions," which means the Zionist agencies and organizations.

The leading newspaper *Haaretz*—then, as now, a Zionist voice that was deeply conscience-stricken over it all—spoke out. Its columnist, the Hebrew author Moshe Smilanski (of the Ichud), agreed with the Custodian's report that a large part of the public was responsible for the theft of Arab property.[65] "Towns, villages and agricultural property were robbed without shame, and lawless individuals of the masses as well as the intelligentsia enriched themselves from occupied property." He called for measures against those responsible, but that was naive.

Smilanski also wrote: "Some time we will have to account for its theft and despoliation not only to our consciences but also to the law." There he was quite wrong. The same people who tolerated the robbery devised a whole series of laws which not only legalized the grab but permitted its systematic extension; but that is for another article on the story of the Israeli Arab minority.

14

Now ye may see this, as we have declared, not so much by ancient histories, as ye may if ye search what hath been wickedly done of late through the pestilent behavior of them that are unworthily placed in authority.—Esther (Apocrypha) 16: 7.

WHILE THE ROBBERY COULD always be reconciled with law, given the power of a state, it could not be reconciled with conscience by those Israelis who hold out against the tide of chauvinism in the little country. The intellectuals of Ichud or *Haaretz* are wont to lament the moral degeneration exhibited when a people, themselves so recently persecuted and despoiled in Europe, visit such wrongs upon a minority which is under their own newly acquired power.

Without in the least derogating this moral indignation at the treatment of the Arab minority, which is richly justified, one aspect of the denunciation misses the mark. The moral indignation should not be visited in the first place against the miserable, harassed, driven Jewish DPs from Europe who, in their fear and need, were used as pawns to grab the land and property of the dispossessed Arabs. They were steered and pushed into this position by those who knew what they were doing—Zionist arms like the Jewish Agency, Zionist authorities in the armed forces and government, both by design and by toleration.

Zionism—the ideology of Jewish chauvinism—showed that it was and is one of the deeply reactionary conceptions of the political world. The child of anti-Semitism, it became the father of another form of ethnic oppression; if genocide means the murder of a people as such, then there should be a word for the robbery of a people as such.

What Zionism created in Palestine in 1948 was the first act of a tragedy.

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It is never agreeable to pick flaws in the things we love, and it is frequently thankless.... But what should a reporter do about the faults that do exist? I think he should do his job—and report them.... When the truth finally comes out, as it must, those who have been misinformed will not be grateful to the purveyors of fables.

There is another reason for telling the whole truth clearly. Israel is new. Israel is malleable, like a little child with soft and delicate bones. The evils of older states are the accretion of age, the slow hardening of youthful tendencies into ancient ritual. There is still time in Israel. But in Israel the bad, like the good, is aging quickly.—Hal Lehrman, "Commentary," July 1949.

BY
HAL DRAPER

10
ISRAEL'S ARAB MINORITY: THE GREAT LAND ROBBERY

But the discussion of Zionism is beset with the additional difficulty that clear and honest thinking is subtly hindered by the fact that really honest speaking is almost unattainable. An exceptionally long history of struggle and suffering has left many sore and sensitive spots in the body of Israel, and the thoughtful Gentile feels the necessity of excessive caution lest he touch any of these tender spots; while the Jew, no matter how emancipated, cannot completely overcome the effects of a traditional attitude which puts group loyalty above devotion to the simple truth, and regards it as the most deadly sin to tell the truth in the hearing of the hereditary enemy. Self-respecting Jews also cannot help leaning backward in expressions which may endanger their being identified with those who for their belly's sake creep out of the Jewish fold. The discussion of Zionism has thus been largely left to those who are more zealous about the triumph of their righteous cause than scrupulous about the justice of their arguments. MORRIS RAPHAEL COHEN

As a result of the mass flight of the Palestinian Arab population during the 1948 war, there were only about 170,000 Arabs left within the expanded borders of Israel's territory after the armistices, as compared with 700,000 Arabs in this area before the start of the war.

This was a tremendous reduction from the proportions envisioned in the Partition Plan adopted by the UN in 1947. In the smaller Israel marked out by the partition, about 45 per cent would have been Arab (not even counting in the Bedouin); though it was expected that Jewish immigration would soon change the figure.

So Israel virtually began with an Arab minority of only 10 to 11 per cent, about the same as the Negro minority in the United States.

Today, according to government figures, the whole non-Jewish population is about 192,000, out of a total population of about 1,720,000. If we eliminate the 17,500 Druzes from this non-Jewish figure, then of the remaining 174,000 Arabs there are 131,500 Moslems and 42,800 Christians.

The proportion of Christians among the Arabs, as against Moslems, is now over twice as high as it was before the war—20 to 25 per cent as against the pre-war 10 per cent. This means an added barrier against the automatic identification of the Arab minority with most foreign Arab regimes.

The largest Arab concentration, the all-Arab town of Nazareth, is predominantly Christian. It has over 20,000 Arabs, as against the remnant

of 7000 in Haifa and 5500 in Jaffa. All together, 51,000 Arabs live in towns (according to government figures) as against about 70 per cent who live in the 102 Arab villages.

A basic fact to keep in mind, too often obscured in both Zionist and Arab propaganda, is that this Arab minority as it presently exists consists largely of those Arabs who succeeded in resisting all of the considerable pressures to take part in the wartime flight, both from the foreign Arab aggressors and their irregulars and from the Zionist forces. They withstood a great deal and did not become refugees.

Even if one accepts the standard Zionist tale that the Palestinian refugees fled the country out of support to the foreign Arab invaders, still surely those people who did *not* become refugees thereby proved doubly and trebly that they were far from being "fifth-columnists." While the Zionist agencies seized the opportunity afforded by the flight to despoil the displaced Arabs of their land and property, surely there could be no question of dispossessing *these* Arabs who had not fled over the borders? . . .

There was question indeed. While much of the story of the land-grab concerns the refugees, who are now outside Israel's borders, we shall be presently concerned with the treatment of the Arab minority who remained inside.

In our preceding article on the Arab flight, we referred to the unofficial looting, property-snatching and land-grabbing which went on in the course of the fighting, directed against Palestinian Arab civilians. This, to be sure, was the start of the land-grab but it was still unofficial in the sense of being unsanctioned by explicit law and official government action, however deliberately it was carried through by official Zionist bodies like the Jewish Agency, or furthered by the military commanders. This was bad enough, but the story that has to be told now is of a different order: the robbery of a people carried through in planned, deliberate, "legal" action by the formal action of the Israel government over a period of years, and not in the heat or turmoil of war.

THE EXTENT OF THIS ROBBERY, in terms of its economic importance to Israel, has already been partially sketched:* over a third of Israel's Jewish population lives on property stolen from displaced Arabs; most Arab-owned citrus groves were taken, plus almost all of the olive groves; etc. Let us now fill out this picture, keeping in mind that the entire area of Israel is not much over five million acres, or 23 million dunams in the Palestinian measure, of which less than a quarter are under cultivation. (A dunam equals one-fourth of an acre for rough estimate.)

Just before the war, the total amount of Jewish-owned land in all of Palestine was only 1,850,000 dunams. The total amount of *cultivable* land taken from the Arabs after that was 4,574,000 dunams, or nearly 2½ times as much[1]—a fifth of the total area of the country. As for the total land taken—

The CCP [UN's Conciliation Commission for Palestine] estimated that although only a little more than a quarter was considered cultivable, more than 80 per cent of Israel's total area . . . represented land abandoned by the Arab refugees.[2] . . . [The 80% figure includes areas, such as Bedouin lands in the Negev, that had been held by Arabs traditionally with virtually all rights except juridical ownership, which was retained by the British colonial government.—H. D.]

*NI, Summer 1956, p. 88.

Furthermore:

. . . They left whole cities like Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramleh, Baysan, Migdal-Gad; 388 towns and villages; and large parts of 94 other cities and towns, containing nearly a quarter of all the buildings in Israel. Ten thousand shops, businesses and stores were left in Jewish hands. . . .[3]

Twenty thousand dunams of absentee property were leased by the Custodian [Israel government official in charge] in 1952 for industrial purposes. A third of Israel's stone production was supplied by 52 Arab quarries under his jurisdiction. . . .[4]

The Custodian was also responsible for four million Palestine pounds in Arab bank accounts blocked in Israel,* and an undetermined amount of shares in businesses, corporations, companies and partnerships. In 1953 his office was one of the largest employers in Israel, and perhaps the largest single employer of new immigrants.[5]

According to the CCP (UN) estimate, the total value of the lands taken from the Arabs was over 100 million Palestine pounds, to which should be added another 20 million pounds for movable property appropriated.[6] (In 1950, this total of 120 million Palestine pounds was worth $336 million.) Arab estimates went up to 10 or 20 times this amount. The Israel government has refused to give its own estimate.†

*The money in these blocked bank accounts was one of the few items of Arab property largely released later—four-fifths by the October 1956 report of the UN's CCP. Of course, this benefited mainly better-off Arabs, not the fellahin. The problem involved only 6050 Arab refugee accounts.

†In general the Israel government has cloaked many details of the land-grab in secrecy. Dr. Peretz writes:

"Much information concerning the use, amounts, and distribution of abandoned Arab property and the government's policy toward it was secret. Records and most reports of the Custodian of Absentee Property were secret. . . . Even the United Nations, in spite of frequent requests, was unable to obtain adequate information about Israel's disposition of Arab property."—Peretz (ref. n. 1), vol. II, p. 230.

Israel consistently refused to participate in UN attempts to set up mixed commissions "to administer conservation of existing properties including orange groves; to determine property ownership; and to evaluate property damages, including those to orange groves." The Arab states accepted these proposals. (Ibid., p. 262.)

The Israel agency in charge, the Custodian of Absentee Property, wasn't telling anybody: "The decision [of the government in 1953 to sell Custodian-held urban property] caused great concern to the Israeli Arabs who feared that their absentee property would also be sold. At a meeting in Nazareth called to clarify the situation, absentee Arab citizens were told to send their questions in writing to the Custodian's office for study. A year later they had still received no reply." (Ibid., p. 303.)

In the 1950 Knesset debate on a new land-grab law, when opposition parties made angry charges that the government was favoring the ruling Mapai party in distributing the acquired land, "One General Zionist member attacked the Custodian's office as 'a secret organization' which operated free of parliamentary control." (Ibid., p. 285.)

The UN agency (Conciliation Commission for Palestine) therefore had to work out its own estimates with considerable effort; Peretz's book explains at great length the bases and methods it used in arriving at its conclusions, which he gives.

‡Of the 4 million-plus dunams taken from Arabs, "approximately 300,000 dunams belonged to Arab residents of Israel who had fled from one section of the state to another during the fighting, or had been moved from their villages by the Jewish authorities for 'security reasons.'" (Peretz in Middle East Journal, ref. n. 32.) And in his book (ref. n. 1) Peretz also mentions 30,000 such Arabs, adding, "as well as much of their urban property."

Of course the above inventory applies to all the displaced Arabs, most of whom are now refugees and not in the country. But how much was stolen from Arabs who are still in the country and who did not flee?

The leading Israeli daily *Haaretz* wrote in a [illegible] the Arab minority problem:

Individual DPs may be found in virtually every Arab village in Israel. 15,000 is the estimated number of fellahin [peasants] who have been dislodged from their homes and farms and left utterly destitute. About 15,000 more have been only partially hurt, some more and some less. The area of land seized under the Land Acquisition Law from the Arabs who did not flee from Israel—not counting those who did flee, from whom much more was taken away—amounts to over a million dunams, at least one half of which represents fertile and easily cultivable level country, the balance being stony mountainous terrain capable of cultivation only with the fellah's primitive plow.[7]

On the basis of a different estimate,‡ Dr. Don Peretz writes that

Approximately 40 per cent of the land owned by legal Arab residents of Israel

was confiscated by the authorities as part of their absentee-property policy.[8]

Forty per cent of the land owned by presently *legal Arab residents* of the country, not even counting the other Palestinian Arabs who were driven out, or helped out, or kept out of the country by the Israeli refugee policy!

Let us now see how all this was done, from 1948 to the present.

1

The day we lick the Arabs, that is the day, I think, when we shall be sowing the seed of an eternal hatred of such dimensions that Jews will not be able to live in that part of the world for centuries to come.

JUDAH L. MAGNES, 1946

WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN how the land-grab and property-steal began in the course of the 1948 war itself under the initiative particularly of the Jewish Agency (an arm of the World Zionist Organization executive) and of the military commanders on the spot, who of course were formally the agencies of the new Israel government, as well as of less official looters and pillagers; while "affairs in many areas degenerated without any restraint."*

Almost a month after the Deir Yassin massacre, when the Arab flight was reaching a flood, the Zionist daily *Palestine Post* (May 5) already announced that a "Custodian of Arab Property" had ben appointed in the Jerusalem area, and that similar authorities had been set up in other sections. This Custodian, said the paper, was a Haganah officer, name a secret, appointed by the Jewish Agency. In view of the role being played by the army and the Jewish Agency itself with respect to the grab of Arab property, one may wonder whether the appointment of an officer as Custodian was meant to restrain the grab, or merely to regulate and channelize it. (This, of course, was still over a week before the State of Israel and its government were formally set up by declaration on May 15.)

In the early days of the war, the *ad hoc* decisions of various field commanders substituted for a unified, preconceived plan of operation [regarding Arab property]....

...From April until the Custodian's appointment [in July], the army had primary responsibility for occupied Arab property. Because it conquered the property, the military considered itself the rightful owner. When the time came for the Custodian to take over from the army, military authorities often placed obstructions in his way, Sometimes for days and weeks, the army prevented the Custodian from entering cities to take charge of absentee property.[9]

(In studying the fate of the Arab minority in Israel we will often find that the military authorities, representing the most chauvinist elements in Zionism, bucked the government or its courts for a more reactionary policy, perhaps the most spectacular case being the razing of the Arab town of Ikrit in 1951. This pattern began early.)

Once the state came into existence and the provisional government took over, bits of emergency legislation were improvised to give a color of legal sanction to what was actually being done. The first was on June 24, an Abandoned Areas Ordinance which gave a most peculiar definition of an "abandoned area":

1. (a) "Abandoned area" means any area or place conquered by or surrendered to armed forces or deserted by all or part of its inhabitants, and which has been declared by order to be an abandoned area.[10]

This law was made retroactive to the creation of the state, and in it the government gave itself the power to make all regulations for the "abandoned areas."

The definition of "abandoned area" was deliberately made so wide-open that it applied to virtually any Arab village or town or section, whether it had been abandoned or not. Even where the population had really "abandoned" a village, they may have merely gone a few miles away to wait out the shooting before coming back; or only *some* of the inhabitants may have fled; and indeed nobody at all need have fled anywhere, according to the carefully expansive formulation of the definition.

The ordinance therefore did not have to use ethnic terms to pinpoint its objective as *Arab* property. Actually many a Jewish area became "abandoned" by this definition too, but this is purely academic in view of the fact that the sharp edge of the ordinance was intended to be wielded solely in one direction.

The government set up a "Custodian of Abandoned Property"—a change of label from the previously designated Custodian of *Arab* Property in order not to formalize the fact of ethnic robbery. The first Custodian was appointed on July 15.

Since he naturally was not going to work the land himself—

...therefore steps were taken to legalize its use by the Jewish agricultural settlements which had occupied much of it. The Ministry of Agriculture was given power to assign this land to cultivators whom it could designate for a period of up to one year.[11]

It is clear, then, that the government did not aim its ordinance only against "bad" Arabs who had fled to help the invaders, as the Zionist story goes. No such criterion is involved in this ordinance in any way.

THIS ORDINANCE was only the beginning.

Dr. Peretz relates:

Long-term policy in the latter half of 1948 was to present the Arabs with the fact that a large part of their property no longer existed and that areas for their resettlement in Israel would be determined by security and political factors. As yet there was no government plan for the use of refugee property, but due to security reasons, their immediate return was not permitted....

By the end of the year, government policy concerning use of the property also began to assume long-term aspects....[12]

In December 1948 the Ministry of Finance issued its first Absentee Property Regulations. A "Custodian of *Absentee* Property" replaced the Custodian of Abandoned Property. This had the effect of transferring the label from the land to the person affected, but the change in terminology didn't help much. Just as "abandoned" property had been defined to include land that was never abandoned, so "absentee" was defined to include Arabs who were not only present in Israel but who had never been absent. According to *Haaretz*, "there is even a special label devised for these people, 'present absentees.' "[13]

The key definition of "absentee" in these regulations was: a Palestine citizen who had left his normal or habitual place of residence.[14] There was no pretense at limiting it to Arabs who had fled over the border or even to the other side of the fighting lines. Dr. Peretz explains:

Every Arab in Palestine who had left his town or village after November 29, 1947 [date of UN partition decision] was liable to be classified as an absentee under the regulations. All Arabs who held property in the New City of Acre, regardless of the fact that they may never have traveled farther than the few meters to the Old City, were classified as

*NI, Summer 1956, p. 103-4.

absentees. The 30,000 Arabs who fled from one place to another within Israel, but who never left the country, were also liable to have their property declared absentee. Any individual who may have gone to Beirut or Bethlehem for a one-day visit during the latter days of the Mandate was automatically an absentee.[15]

Naturally, this formula was so broad that it could also net Jews who might come under the extended definition of "absentee." This danger was mainly academic, since those who administered the regulations knew well enough against whom it was aimed. But there were safeguards just in case:

The Custodian could issue a certificate stating that anyone was not an absentee if "in his opinion" such a person left his residence from fear of Israel's enemies, or if the Custodian believed that he was capable of managing his properties efficiently, without giving aid to Israel's enemies.[16]

There is no case where the provisions of the various land-grab laws (this one, or any subsequent one) were ever enforced against a Jew, even though they may have applied, and even though the laws were never ethnically formulated so as to be applicable to Arabs only.

Here are some of the other remarkable provisions of these regulations:

(1) The Custodian "could take over all property which might be obtained *in the future* by an individual whom he certified to be absentee."[17] (Italics added.)

(2) The Arab is guilty till he proves himself innocent:

The Custodian could take over most Arab property in Israel on the strength of his own judgment by certifying in writing that any person or body of persons, and that any property was absentee. The burden of proof that any property was not absentee fell upon its owner, but the Custodian could not be questioned concerning the source of information on the grounds of which he had declared a person or property absentee.[18]

(3) The Custodian could expropriate business associates of "absentee" Arabs, even though the associates themselves were not absentee:

All businesses in which at least one-half of the number of persons, partners, shareholders, directors or managers were absentees, or in which absentees were dominant or controlled at least half of the capital, were turned over *in whole* to the Custodian. [Italics added.][19]

(4) Even where the Custodian might decide to release "absentee" property to its rightful owner, the game was not finished:

The Custodian could require the owner to deliver other property in exchange for his released property.... The Custodian could withhold the certificates to release property until he received a maintenance payment not to exceed five per cent per annum of the property's value, to be determined by the price which could have been obtained had the property been sold in the market.... In addition, the Custodian was entitled to receive payment for all expenses incurred in holding the property, together with interest at the rate of six per cent per annum from the date he took over.[20]

(5) The Custodian could do no wrong:

Any person carrying out an order given by the Custodian was not held responsible if it was later proved that the property was not absentees'.[21]

When this legal atrocity was discussed in the Knesset, some of the truth about it was told by the Arab deputy Sayf al-Din al-Zabi, who represented a Mapai-affiliated "Arab" list.* He challenged the seizure by the Custodian of property belonging to Arabs who were legal residents of Israel, who had participated in the first elections and who held government-issued identity cards. Many were absent from their residence for a few days only during the fighting which overtook their villages, but did not leave the country. Al-Zabi pointed out that many residents of Turan and Nazareth who were gone only a few hours also lost their property to the Custodian. The majority of the villagers of Maalul, Andor [Eindor], and Al-Mujidal who took refuge in Nazareth when fighting occurred near their homes were declared absentees although they never left Israel's territory. Half the Arab inhabitants of Kafr Elut remained in their village during the fighting. The other half took refuge in Nazareth, but all the villagers became absentees, and even those who remained in their homes were required to pay rent to the Custodian for the use of their own lands. In Acre and Shafa Amr many Arabs were not permitted to cultivate their lands which were used by surrounding Jewish collectives under the authority of the Custodian and the Ministry of Agriculture. Villagers of Baysan and Zippori were moved from their villages by the army long after the end of active hostilities, and their property was turned over to the Custodian. Arabs of Al-Qitna were also moved by the army to Al-Ghabsiya and those of Al-Halhala were moved to Akbara for "security reasons," and their property declared absentee.[22]

So said Al-Zabi; and since he is Arab, perhaps convinced Zionists can persuade themselves that he must be exaggerating, in spite of the fact that he is the Mapai's own domesticated Arab.

But the provisions of these regulations speak eloquently enough of the aims which animated the men who thought them up.

THE FOLLOWING MONTH, January 1949, a new legal instrument came into being in the form of an amendment to the Cultivation of Wastelands emergency ordinance. This empowered the Ministry of Agriculture to grant longer leases to Jewish settlers who were working "absentee" lands. It was a step on the road to their complete alienation; for at this point, it should be remembered, the "absentee" Arabs still owned the land in theory; the Custodian was simply . . . taking care of it in their theoretical absence.

The ordinance enabled the government to begin settling absentee [Arab] villages with [Jewish] farmers who would work the surrounding land. Government organizations were formed to manage the property and to rent land to individual farmers or contracting companies. Settlers were given the opportunity to choose lands near their villages through the Jewish National Fund....[23]

This Cultivation of Wastelands ordinance was also the basis of a land-grab method which did not depend on the "absentee" gimmick, and therefore could be used against those Arab landholders who could not be fitted into the absentee category even with stretching. It

empowers the Minister of Agriculture to seize any plot of land lying waste, regardless of the reason—the land might even be located in an area not accessible without a special permit, which the Military Governor might refuse to issue—and hand it to anyone for "temporary" cultivation. The only condition was that the Minister send a prior notice to the owner warning him to resume the cultivation of his land—and the warning could be in the form of a written notice displayed in a conspicuous place on his land, which, as we have said, was not at all accessible to the owner—and the owner took no heed of the warning. Since the Arab landowners concerned "took no heed" of the warning and proceeded to "keep their lands waste," those lands were leased by the Minister for a nominal sum to Jewish settlements and contractors, who in many instances employed the landowners themselves in the cult-

*That is, this Arab notable represented an "Arab party" created by the Mapai, which is the ruling Zionist party, to corral Arab votes. In general, these men are regarded as turncoats by most Arabs, and rightly so; but on Arab questions in the Knesset they usually make the record in speeches of complaint and in their vote. At any rate, it is evident, such men as Al-Zabi are not "anti-Israel demagogues" or "agitators" but quite the reverse: the very tamest specimens the Zionists can find. The only point that is relevant here is whether they tell the minimum truth in their speeches of complaint in the Knesset, while still remaining affiliated with the Mapai.

ivation of those lands, in return for a portion of the crops. And for this purpose the Military Governor was not at all averse to granting them entry permits into the closed areas.[24]

In other words, it utilized what Mordechai Stein has aptly called "a sort of double-play of two laws."[25] One, which permits the government to seize any land in Military Government areas "in the interests of the public safety" and declare it a "security zone," is based on the Emergency Regulations of 1945—i.e., of the British Mandate. The Israel government has taken over these hated laws, which were originally set up in good measure as a colonialist's means of repressing the Zionist underground, and are equally suited as the Zionists' means to despoil the Arab minority.

When this ordinance is applied to an area, and its Arab owners ejected, the second ordinance comes into play. Since the land is not being cultivated by its Arab owners any longer, it can be taken over by the state as "wasteland" and handed over to Jewish settlers who *will* cultivate it—i.e., who will be allowed to cultivate it.[26]

The land-robbery based on this "double play" is also aimed against Israeli Arabs who never fled.* But, as explained at the end of this article, this phase of the land robbery will be detailed in a future study dealing with Israel's military rule over its Arab minority.

2

It used to be said in the liberal first quarter of our century that a country was judged by the manner in which it treated its Jews. It is, therefore, understandably natural that the converse proposition should be suggested, and the question asked: how does the Jewish State treat its Arabs? JON KIMCHE

*M. Stein, in the article quoted above (ref. n. 25), writing as a socialist anti-Zionist, says: "With the help of this legal double-play, dozens of Arab villages have been confiscated (Ghabsiye, Ikrit, Kfar Anan, Ferradie, Birim, Seffurie, Mojdel, Mansura, Berwe, Damun, Um-el-Faraj, etc.)."

By 1950, with the relative stabilization that followed the victory in the 1948 war, the government felt that a firmer juridical basis for the land-grab was necessary, and so it had the Knesset pass a law to legalize what had been done. Up to this time, the land-grab had been carried through via the ordinances of the provisional government.

This was the Absentee Property Law of March 1950. Dr. Peretz sums it up:

Actually the Absentee Property Law defined no new procedure. It merely legalized the *de facto* situation which grew out of improvisation under wartime emergency conditions. . . .[27]

But

Minor changes somewhat curtailed the Custodian's power and improved the status of absentees.[28]

One change was to narrow somewhat the definition of an absentee:

The new definition made an absentee of any Palestinian who, at any time since the UN partition decision of November 1947, had "left his place of habitual residence . . . for a place in Palestine held . . . by forces which sought to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel or which fought against it after its establishment. . . ." So—

It did not include Arabs who remained in areas controlled by Jewish forces after November 29, 1947 [the partition decision], provided they had not left such areas after that date . . . the number of Arabs who benefited from the change was not large.[29]

Besides, a good deal of the land-grab had already proceeded according to the wide-open provisions of the preceding ordinances, and the Arabs did not automatically get their land back just because the new law did not apply to them. On the contrary; we shall see that in 1953 the Knesset had to pass another law precisely to legalize (once more) the retention of land stolen from Arabs outside the framework of any law or ordinance.

Other changes introduced by the 1950 law were: the Custodian could take over a business only when *all* the members, partners, shareholders, etc. were absentees, rather than half; the Custodian was no longer exempt from answering a court about the source of his knowledge about the status of an absentee; his maintenance payment was reduced from 5 per cent to 4. In addition, notes Schechtman,[30] the new law "required the Custodian to pay debts owed by absentees whose property they controlled, and to obey court orders for attachments"—a change which did not do the absentees any good.

Such minor changes did little to affect either the status of absentee property, most of which was already distributed, or the status of its original owners. Presentation of absentee property cases in the courts by Arabs, however, was facilitated.[31]

Dr. Peretz, in an outstanding magazine article, described the effect of this law in terms similar to those we have seen above in connection with the December 1948 regulations. After noting its definition of absentee, he said:

Consequently, any Arab of Nazareth who might have visited the Old City of Jerusalem or Bethlehem on Christmas 1948 automatically became an "absentee" under the law. Nearly all the Arab refugees in Israel, as well as the 30,000 inhabitants of the Little Triangle which became part of the state under the armistice agreements with Jordan, were classified as "absentees." Many Israeli Arabs who, during the battle of Acre, fled from their homes in the new to the old city lost their property under the provisions of this law.

. . . All of the new city of Acre was turned over to recent [Jewish] immigrants despite the fact that many of its Arab "absentee" home owners were living a few yards away. . . .[32]

The pro-Zionist journalist Hal Lehrman has also remarked that "It was further charged that Israel authorities tended to treat any Arab owner, *ipso facto*, as an absentee unless he obtained, on his own considerable time and at his own expense, a certificate to the contrary."[33]

In the Knesset at the time of its passage, a series of amendments (offered mainly by the Arab deputies) were turned down, even though many of them proposed only an elementary measure of fair dealing. Among these were amendments to protect the land of Arabs (1) who were legal citizens of Israel, with an identity card, and had *not* aided the enemy; (2) who had never fled the country; (3) who had been expelled from their villages when these were conquered by the Israeli troops; etc.[34] In defiance of conscience, these Arabs were specifically voted into the "absentee" category.

Another proposed amendment wanted to set up a special authority, instead of the Custodian's say-so, to decide on the property of those Arabs who were legally in Israel. As *Haaretz* put it on March 20 after the law was passed, "Elementary feelings of justice demand that an Arab who legally returns to Israel should not continue to be an absentee. . . . We are not at war with the Arabs who are established citizens of the state. . . . A law which automatically makes them absentee is insufferable. . . . This is a matter of conscience and political understanding."

But it was the insufferable that was passed; and it seemed that the state of Israel was indeed "at war with the Arabs who are established citizens of the state."

The popular columnist Courtney of the pro-government *Jerusalem Post* attacked the law as "perhaps the most serious factor creating embitterment among all Arabs."

He pointed out that in Galilee twenty villages had been deprived of their property by Jewish collectives, which "arrogated to themselves, through long-term leases granted by the Minister of Agriculture, lands of Arabs who were free of any guilt or wrongdoing." [35]

The Israeli Arab spokesman E. N. Koussa, writing in the Ichud's organ *Ner* (January 1951), pointed out there was even a member of the Knesset who enjoyed all the privileges of a deputy and yet, because he was an Arab, "is under a legal disability to control his properties. Such is the actual condition of Mr. Tufiq Tubi, the Arab Knesset member."

Incidentally, Tubi is a Communist Party deputy, but this is hardly relevant to the fact that there exists a peculiar Israeli institution of "absentee" deputies voting on the country's laws.

One aspect of the Absentee Property Law precipitated a fight among the Jewish deputies themselves. Opposition parties criticized the great power vested in the Custodian, who was appointed by the Mapai's minister of Finance. "Control of a quarter of Israel's wealth and most of its land was a plum they hesitated to let fall to Israel's largest party,"[36] though they had not hesitated to steal this plum from the Arabs. Opponents acused the Custodian of giving 90 per cent of absentee property to Mapai-controlled institutions, cooperatives, etc., at half of its market value, and of selling absentee property to a favored few.

AS MENTIONED ABOVE, one advantage gained by the Arabs was that it was easier to bring the government robbers to court, for an accounting. On this whole issue of the land-robbery the Israeli courts have often been a prominent bright spot as defenders of justice,* but their remedial power has been too limited to make any considerable difference in the outcome. Court cases, however, have been particularly useful as documentable illustrations of what was going on, though one must bear in mind how few Arabs could even think of going through the court procedures.

Thus Dr. Peretz cites the "claim of Tanus Ilyas al-Askar against the Custodian" as "typical of many cases which reached the courts and thousands that did not." Let us take a look at this "typical" case.

Askar was a legal resident of Haifa, with an Israeli identity card; he had in fact voted in the national elections. In January 1948 he had gone to a village near Israel's northern frontier but had returned to Haifa in March.

He then obtained permission from the Custodian to receive rent from his home in Haifa and to lease a shop. Shortly thereafter he was denounced as an absentee who had procured his contract under false pretenses. The Custodian certified that he was an absentee and ordered him to evacuate his shop.[37]

Askar went to court in self-defense. The High Court found in his favor on the ground that he had in fact exercised *de jure* citizenship rights and that this "automatically exempted him from the Custodian's arbitrary authority."

The court expressed the opinion in this case that, in the light of the evidence, Askar had been classified an absentee in order to force his removal from his shop. "It can be said," stated the court, "that the certificate [classifying him as absentee] was issued only to deprive the claimant of elementary rights and of legal assistance and defense, and in this respect the Custodian acted in an untoward manner."[38]

Another case is summarized by Judd Teller, a professional Zionist journalist who was UN correspondent in New York for *Davar*, the Histadrut organ. This is from a 1951 article of his:

There is the case, still pending in the courts, of Abed il Al and his family, who live in Om il Faraj, a Galilee village, and whom the military authorities had ordered deported as infiltrees. Al, admitting that he had fled the village at the outset of Arab-Israeli hostilities, claims that he has lived there all his life, that it is ridiculous to brand him an infiltree, that his troubles in fact started only after he had refused to agree to a proposal by the military that he exchange his rich land in Galilee for an inferior parcel in another part of the country, and that if he lost his case all other Arabs in that village soon would face a similar choice because a nearby kibbutz was determined to increase its own holdings by annexing Arab lands. In a somewhat similar case, the Israeli high court has upheld an Arab claim and nullified an evacuation order.[39]

On the role of the courts in tempering the land-robbery law in some cases, the pro-Zionist journalist Hal Lehrman remarked:

Mistreated Arabs could appeal successfully to the Supreme Court for redress. But the very frequency of such appeals showed the extent of the abuses, and many Arab fellaheen lacked the sophistication, the funds or the daring to go over the head of the official controlling their areas. The Court itself found occasion severely to reprimand the Custodian's office for its unjust interpretation of the law.[40]

Now in general, as we have noted, the Absentee Property Law of 1950 only legalized the *de facto* robbery that had already gone on, though in some minor respects (which we have noted) the status of absentees was a bit improved. Outside of the issue of Arab rights, however, "the fundamental change introduced by the law was the Custodian's privilege to sell property."[41]

Up to this time, theoretically the Custodian was simply holding the land on behalf of its owners. The new provision in the law "was the first step toward legally implementing the new policy of absorbing Arab holdings through development,"[42] that is, of permanently and juridically alienating the land from its Arab owners. A Development Authority was set up which had the right to buy absentee property from the Custodian. The Jewish National Fund was specifically authorized to purchase such land.

The Hebrew University professor Norman Bentwich states in his book *Israel*, published in 1952:

The [Jewish National] Fund has now become an indispensable adjunct of the State for both rural and urban development. It buys from the Custodian of Absentee Property, appointed by the State, the land and houses of the fugitive Arabs, and makes them available to the State Development Board for occupation, the purchase-price, in whole *or part*, being held as compensation for the former Arab owners. Till 1947 it has acquired 250,000 acres—1,000,000 dunams in the Palestine measure; by 1951 it had trebled that holding. The programme for the next five years is to acquire another 500,000 acres, and for that the Fund hopes to collect 250,000,000 dollars. [Italics added.][43]

It should be remembered that the purchase-price, which is referred to, was set by one Zionist official for sale to another Zionist official for the purpose of integrating the land into the Zionist scheme of development. The

*For example, Oscar Kraines of NYU writes in his book that under the 1950 land law, "the Custodian of absentee owners' property was authorized to exempt Arabs who had left their residence for valid reasons. In a number of appeals, the Supreme Court, to its credit for judicial integrity and impartiality, upheld the Arabs and severely reprimanded the Custodian and his staff for arbitrary, capricious, and harsh action in excess of their authority." (Israel, the Emergence of a New Nation, 1954, p. 27.)

"former" Arab owners had nothing to say about it, least of all about whether they wanted to sell in the first place. In addition, as Bentwich indicates, the Arab owner might be allocated only a "part" of the purchase-price which is thus set for his own land.

The expectations of which Bentwich wrote were indeed realized. On July 3, 1953 the *Jerusalem Post* reported that

> The Government signed an agreement with the Jewish National Fund this week for the sale of two million dunams, mostly abandoned land, it was announced yesterday.
>
> The agreement was concluded in accordance with Government decisions in 1949 and in 1951....
>
> The land in question is in all sectors of the country and is mostly agricultural. About 400 new [Jewish] settlements have in the meantime been established on it by the Jewish Agency....
>
> After the mass flight of the Arabs the Government took over the custody of their holdings. In order to normalize [sic] the land situation, abandoned land is being transferred to the Jewish National Fund in a series of land transactions.
>
> The significance of the latest land transaction may be measured from the fact that the entire area of Israel is a little over 20 million dunams, of which only 5 million dunams are under cultivation.

Thus the deed was consummated.

A LITTLE EASE-UP on one point took place in 1951 under the pressure of the election campaign for the Knesset. After all, the Arabs had 10 per cent of the votes, and the Mapai-affiliated "Arab" parties had to have some reason for asking for these votes; the Communist Party was getting the support of up to a third of the Arab minority and the government parties were worried. It is remarkable that even under these circumstances the paltry concession that was made was only such as to point up the nature of the whole operation.

The amendment that was passed allowed Arabs who were legal residents to keep any property which they might obtain *in the future;* they were not to be robbed of any property which they did not *yet* possess. The change did not affect the steal that had already gone on and was still going on. Such was its magnanimity.

According to Dr. Peretz' account, even this great-hearted gesture was first initiated in the Knesset, late in 1950, by a Mapainik, David Ha-Cohen, who had to break party discipline in order to do so. But the following year, under the spotlight of the election campaign getting under way, the Knesset passed it.

> Even Arabs who were not absentees were liable to be affected by the [Absentee Property] law without Ha-Cohen's amendment. If a non-absentee Arab citizen willed property to his wife or child or to another member of his family who returned to Israel [from refuge abroad] under the plan to reunite families, their inheritance would be insecure. The Custodian could immediately seize it under the present law.[44]

That much was vouchsafed to justice. Other things were promised with an eye on the vote. The Custodian, and also Moshe Sharett, talked about loosening up on some of the stolen property. *Haaretz* commented (June 2, 1951):

> Is it not strange that only now... measures are promised on behalf of the Arab minority? So far no steps have been taken. It seems hardly likely that the policy will change after the elections.

It was a safe prediction.

3

> And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.
>
> And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.
>
> And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.
>
> 1 Kings 21: 1-3

THE JURIDICAL COMPLETION of the land-robbery was, however, not quite accomplished yet. One loose end had to be gathered up. There were still tracts of land that had been taken away from Arab peasants, during the war or right after it, whose robbery could still not be justified under any law, in spite of the wide-open character of the measures already passed. Besides, the whole operation could scarcely be considered cleaned up till a show had been made of offering some compensation.*

The task was met handily by the Land Acquisition Law of March 1953. It did not bother with any niggling piecemeal pretexts for stealing land from Arabs. In one fell swoop it came out with a formula which automatically legalized any and all land-robberies that had already taken place.

The way this is done is surely a juridical curiosity. The heart of the law is in Paragraph 2: land "will become the property of the Development Authority . . . free of any encumbrance" if the minister in charge certifies "by signed document" that it fulfills the following three provisions:

> (1) On April 1, 1952, was not in the posession of its owners;
>
> (2) Was used or earmarked within the period from May 4, 1948 to April 1, 1952, for purposes of essential development, settlement, or security;
>
> (3) Is still required for one of these purposes....[45]

The crux is in point (1), which carefully applies the law to any land that "was not in the possession of its owners" for any reason whatsoever—the important reason being, of course, the simple fact that the owner had been illegally kicked off.

The law is being wrongly interpreted by Israel's Arabs, wrote a Zionist journalist from Haifa to the London *Jewish Chronicle.* They are in "panic" because they think it means all Arab-owned land can be "confiscated at will." That is not so, he assures; the law's main aim "is to grant legal status to an already existing situation."[46] It seems he expects his readers to heave a sigh of relief.

Haaretz related, in its January 1955 issue:

> Since the publication of the law in the Official Gazette, up to the end of 1954 the Government Printer had his hands full with the job of issuing official brochures crammed with announcements to the effect that "I, the Minister of Finance... acting under the powers granted me in the law... hereby affirm that the lands specified below are covered by the following conditions... and therefore I order that they be transferred to the ownership of the Development Agency." This short announcement would always be followed by long lists of Arab villages, numbers of land parcels and series of coordinates sufficient to construct an entire map of Israel. When the work was concluded about two months ago,* the Development Agency of the State of Israel found itself the richer by over a million dunams.[47]

Before its passage by the Knesset, the 1953 law was strongly criticized as unjust by a number of liberal and socialist Jewish deputies and spokesmen, but when it came to a vote not a single vote was cast against it by any Jewish deputy. At a protest rally of liberal Jewish and Arab notables, it was stressed that—

> ...the reason why not a single Jewish member of parliament voted against the

*For the question of Israel's offers of compensation to Arab refugees outside the state, which is outside the purview of this study, see Dr. Peretz's work (ref. n. 1).

*The Israel government propaganda booklet The Arabs in Israel (p. 27) says, "The transfer of such land to the Development Authority was completed by March 1954...."

bill, although many members of the Mapai and Mapam parties strongly criticized it before it was adopted, is that a number of powerful kibbutzim (collective farms) belonging to both Mapai and Mapam parties benefited directly from the law by acquiring the land requisitioned from the Arabs. The Left-wing [Mapam] kibbutzim Hamishmar and Kfar Masaryk were the chief beneficiaries. They acquired so much of the requisitioned Arab land that they now rented out parcels of it to some of the Arabs who previously owned it.[48]

In the Knesset a forceful speech against the law was made by Masad Qasis, deputy of a Mapai-affiliated "Arab" party. Among other things he complained that Jewish collectives were given land in some villages still legally inhabited by Arabs, for example Shafa Amr, al-Hamma, Evron; talk of development and security was "sheer deception."[49]

HAARETZ OPENLY said that the purpose of the law was to legalize the seizure of Arab land by Jewish settlements that wanted to expand. "There is no reason to legalize the fact that certain farms exploited the victory of the State in the defense war against invaders, to seize for their own benefit the lands of their neighbors," it said (March 10, 1953). Being politically conservative, *Haaretz* also thought it worthwhile arguing that "seizure of the [Arab] minority's property is liable to undermine the foundations of private property rights."

The Ichud, the only wing of the Zionist movement with a consistent conscience on the subject, naturally spoke out with burning indignation. Here is a good sample from Dr. Shereshevsky, the associate editor of the Ichud organ *Ner*, entitled "We Accuse," addressed to a responsible leader of the Knesset:

[The law's] true meaning is *robbery of land* from people, inhabitants, of the State. They are agricultural people, like you; they are citizens of Israel, like you. There exists only one difference between them and you: they are Arabs and you are a Jew. This difference seemed to you so great and decisive that you were ready to trespass for it all that is required by the Law of Israel and its tradition.

The name given to this "Law" is but a lie to conceal what has truly been fixed by it so that the public may not realize and know that not the "acquisition" of land—by a mutual spontaneous agreement on either side—is meant, but an *expropriation* of lands that have been seized in an arbitrary and illegal way since 1948. This "Law" puts a stamp of legality on criminal actions, "the taking over of land by kibbutzim and settlements from Arab citizens only because these settlements wanted to enlarge their property" (*Haaretz*). One village of 7000 inhabitants, Um-el-Fahm, has thus lost 110,000 dunams and will remain with only 30,000 dunams. The village of Jatt, of 1450 inhabitants, remains with 1600 dunams. The village of Tireh (4000 inhabitants) is left with 9000 dunams....

It is not on behalf of the Arabs that I am writing this letter. They will know how to defend themselves and their rights.... It is not on *their* behalf that I am writing but on *our* behalf, for God's sake "whose name you have profaned among the nations," for the name of the people of Israel, on behalf of our sons and daughters "who have not sinned"![50]

In the course of a series of articles in the liberal *Haaretz*, Moshe Keren summed up in January 1954, under a subhead which said "Robbery With a Legal Coating":

We consider it our bounden duty to spell this subject out in unequivocal terms: for what occurred here was a case of wholesale robbery with a legal coating. Hundreds of thousands of dunams of land were taken away from the Arab minority—I am not talking here of the refugees—through a whole variety of legal devices. The future student of ethnology will wonder how it came to pass that it was the Jewish people, striving to build their state on the foundations of justice and righteousness and having themselves been the victims of unparalleled acts of robbery and expropriation, that should have been capable of doing this to a helpless minority. But the fact remains that they were, and even more depressing is the fact that it was precisely those groups who presume to establish a new society free from injustice and exploitation—the kibbutzim, in other words—who marched in the vanguard of the seizure campaign, and that foremost among them were the self-styled fighters for the idea of absolute justice—the kibbutzim affiliated with Mapam—whose representatives in the Knesset are now missing no opportunity to condemn the government for its discriminatory policy towards the Arabs.[51]

ALTHOUGH THE MAIN objective of the 1953 Land Acquisition Law was to provide a sweeping legalization of all land-robberies committed up to date against Arabs, it formally presented itself also as a law to provide compensation for the lands that had been and were being stolen.* On the one hand, this allowed the government to present the operation as a respectable financial transaction; on the other, it enabled Zionist propagandists to invent a picture of the law as a veritable boon for the Arabs and another clinching "proof" of the happy life which the Arabs led under the Zionist state.

The law did indeed offer a compensation system, and a number of Arabs did get some compensation. A close look at this compensation system, however, will raise the question whether the measure was designed to ensure fair payment to despoiled Israeli Arabs or to get around making such payment.

One point is basic, before any such consideration is made at all. This is the fact that not even a scrupulously fair compensation system could possibly make up for the injustice that was done to this people by separating them from their land in any way at all. The land was not only the economic sustenance of these Israeli Arab peasants; it was also the root of their family life, social life, culture and identification with their ancestral mores. Stealing their land meant, literally, destroying their way of life, even if a certain number of pieces of gold and silver were placed in their hands. And it must be borne in mind that the Arab could not simply take the money and buy any other land he might want—land was able to go in one direction only, ethnically speaking.

Pieces of money could no more take the place of land in their culture than, say, a refugee Jewish diamond merchant settling in Lhassa could be compensated for the theft of his cutting tools and precious stock by an equivalent value in stocks of Tibetan rancid yak butter, a Himalayan delicacy.

It is important to emphasize this because, otherwise, an unwary reader may absorb the notion that the justice or injustice of the entire land-grab operation stands or falls with the adequacy or inadequacy of the compensation which may be the final outcome for some. It would be better not even to discuss this aspect of the question at all than to further this notion by getting into the financial argument involved. With this warning, however, a few points about the compensation offered by the law are in order.

It should be borne in mind, too, that the compensation offered by the

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*The UN's Partition Resolution of 1947, which provided the juridical basis for the creation of the state, had had something to say about land expropriation and compensation, in anticipation of such attempts to take away the minority's land. It provided that the constitution of the new state must embody certain provisions which could not be abrogated by any law or official act, and which were "under the guarantee of the UN" itself. Among these was the following (Chap. 2, Art. 8):

"No expropriation of land owned by an Arab in the Jewish State (by a Jew in the Arab State) shall be allowed except for public purposes. In all cases of expropriation full compensation as fixed by the Supreme Court shall be paid previous to dispossession." (Emphasis added.)

law was only to Arab peasants who were legally in Israel, and did not refer at all to any who were refugees outside the country. It was therefore an offer of payment for only 300,000 dunams* out of the millions of dunams that had been taken. According to Dr. Peretz's account, "The law was also an attempt to appease the growing sentiments which favored payment to the country's Arab citizens for their requisitioned property."[52]

ACCORDING TO THE compensation provisions of the law, the Arab owner will be indemnified in money, "if not otherwise agreed" between him and the government. What about his getting land in return for the land taken from him? This was spelled out in the following paragraph of the law:

> If the acquired property was used for agriculture, and was the main source of livelihood of its owner, who owns no other land from which he can derive a livelihood, the Development Authority is obliged to offer him, on his demand, other property, either in ownership or in lease, as full or as part idemnity. A competent authority, to be appointed by the Minister, will determine the kind of property to be offered, its location, area, and in the case of lease, the term of the lease (provided it is not less than 49 years) and the value of the property for the purpose of calculating the rate of indemnity, and for the purpose of satisfying his requirements for livelihood, all in accordance with rules to be laid down in regulations.[53]

So the Arab owner is not to be given as much land as was robbed from him; he is to be given only as much as befits "his requirements for livelihood," the difference to be made up in money. Who will determine how much he needs for his livelihood? Naturally, those who are engaged in robbing him. In any case, whether this determination is made fairly or not, it is written into the law that these Arab peasants shall be deprived of all land except a subsistence tract, even if the land is legally admitted to be theirs.†

The government decides, subject to court review, what land shall be given in compensation, what kind, where, how much, and whether it is to be granted outright or merely leased to the peasant.[54]

IN CASE OF MONEY compensation, all cash payments are based by the law on the value which the land had *in 1950,* three years before the law was passed; namely, *before* the devaluation of Israel's currency. Surely a most unusual provision! How could it be justified? In the Knesset debate, spokesmen for the law argued that

> The Committee [of the Knesset] had fixed the date to prevent owners from benefiting by any rise in value caused by improvements of the Development Authority.[55]

This might be considered legitimate if it referred to improvements like new buildings, etc. on the land in question,‡ but if that were really the consideration involved, it would have been much more straightforward and simple to write into the law the requirement that this deduction was to be made for the purposes enumerated.

But this would not have suited the intentions of the lawmakers since it would have failed to take advantage of the currency devaluation that took place between 1950 and 1953. "In January 1950 the average official value of the Israel pound was $2.80. At the time of the Knesset debate on compensation, the average official value of the Israel pound was $1.00."[56] A piece of land price-tagged 100 pounds in 1950 would have been tagged somewhere near 280 in 1953; but the Arab would be given little more than a third of what it was worth.

Now just to show that it understood this, the Knesset specifically voted into the law a provision which, it claimed, made up for this currency devaluation: the 1950 value, for purposes of compensation, was to be increased by an amount equal to *three per cent* for each year since then. Only three per cent!

In the Knesset, the Arab deputy Masad Qasis (of a Mapai-affiliated "Arab" party) made another point about the 1950 date:

> In 1950 Arabs were permitted to sell land exclusively to the JNF [Jewish National Fund, the Zionist agency]. They received no more than £I 25 per dunam and in some places as little as £I 15, whereas the present price was nearer to £I 250 or £I 350 per dunam. Qasis proposed to give the courts power to fix the kind and amount of compensation.[57]

So much for the fairness of the law's provision that three-year-old values, not current ones, were to be used as the basis of compensation.

BUT THIS IS ONLY ONE of the factors involved in the reluctance of the despoiled Arabs to settle their claims in accordance with this unjust law. Here is a review of the situation in the January 7, 1955 issue of *Haaretz*:

> The least that might have been expected from the perpetrators of this draconic law is that the one constructive paragraph of the law would be implemented with fairness and decency. Official figures disclose, however, that to date, two years after the passage of the law, no more than one thousand compensation claims have been filed, of which only a few hundred have been settled—and that these are mostly the claims of townsmen whose confiscated lands have been merely a small and subsidiary source of their income, and who are only too glad to receive the money offered them by way of compensation, and some rich farmers who suffer from no lack of land and for whom compensation constituted no problem at all. But not one single fellah, among the thousands of DPs concentrated for the most part in the Galilee has so far been the beneficiary of any measure of agricultural rehabilitation. Why?[58]

This is certainly a very striking fact, particularly given the class differentiation which the *Haaretz* writer stresses.* It is precisely the poor peasants

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*This figure is Dr. Peretz's estimate. The government says, "The total of Arab-owned land involved is estimated at 250,000 dunams," in its propaganda pamphlet, The Arabs in Israel, p. 27—Incidentally, the next sentence in this propaganda booklet is a good example of the slickly misleading statements which fill it: "The other 1,020,000 dunams transferred to the Development Authority under the Act was either Government-owned or Jewish-owned land." Thus the disingenuous author distinguishes it from the "Arab-owned land." But all of this land was equally stolen originally from Arab holders.

†The aforementioned government pamphlet The Arabs in Israel falsely states on p. 25 that the law aims "to provide for appropriate compensation either in land or in cash as desired by the claimant" (emphasis added), even though some details given on the very next page would indicate the falsity of the statement to close inspection.

‡But in a discussion with a New York representative of Israel's Histadrut, I got this interpretation of what is meant by "improvements" from which the Arab must not benefit: e.g., if a new road is built and raises land values around it, including an Arab's land, the latter's land should be evaluated without taking the change into account, for why should "they" benefit from what "we" do? Israeli Arabs are here thought of as "they" (aliens) while only "we" (Jews) are truly of the country; for is it not a "Jewish State"? This is the authentic ethnocentrism of the Israeli Zionist climate. So the Arab is to be compensated on the basis of what land values were at the time he was robbed, just as if he legally ceased to own the land by virtue of being robbed.

*As for the fact itself, note that the Haaretz statement quoted above says "not one single fellah"; and other sources indicate that, even if all Arabs are counted, the overwhelming majority were unwilling to settle or held out for quite some time. Thus in an article in Haaretz on January 14, 1955 by Moshe Keren (ref. n. 51) the writer notes that "a certain improvement in the disposition of the land problem has been taking place in this year, the seventh after the establishment of the State of Israel. Some 500 out of the total of 2000 claims filed to date—and out of the thousands not yet filed with the authorities—have been settled through the grant of compensation in the form of money or land, and the rate of progress in the settlement of the problem is gaining speed." (This writer then also goes on to discuss the reasons for the Arabs' reluctance.)—The government propaganda pamphlet The Arabs in Israel, published later in 1955, says, "Some 2500 Arabs claims have been filed, of which 700 have so far been settled." (Page 27.)—Back in 1953, a Zionist journalist Maier Asher (ref. n. 46) wrote that there were only two exceptions to the refusal of Arabs to take the proffered land: "the villagers of Makr, near Acre, and Sahr, near Ramle."

who find the law most unjust and unacceptable; the richer have substantially less difficulty in coming to terms with the masters—hence, incidentally, the very existence of those Mapai-affiliated Arab deputies whom we have had occasion to mention, and who are widely regarded as turncoats; but that is another story.

The *Haaretz* writer asked "Why?" Here is his answer:

> The officials entrusted with the administration of the Land Acquisition Law reply that the bulk of the DPs refuse to listen to any offer of compensation and insist on being allowed to return to their lands and villages, and that the few who desire rehabilitation in some other locality are only willing to take strictly Jewish lands, that is, they refuse to resettle on the property of absentees appropriated by the Development Agency, which is the only category of land the Government is prepared to grant them.
>
> This is quite true, and in unofficial talks with DPs' representatives they freely admit that they would not think of "soiling their hands with the plundered property of their brethren who fled across the border." And those familiar with the mentality of the Israeli Arabs add that the DPs fear—or maybe hope—that the present situation may be reversed, either through a "second round" or through the detachment of the Galilee from Israel in a peace treaty, as a result of Israel's eventual agreement to readmit the Arab refugees.

In other words, the Israel Arab DPs who are *in* Israel are asked by the government not only to condone the robbery of land from their brothers the refugees, but as a matter of fact to become accomplices to the theft by themselves becoming the recipients of stolen property. One cannot gainsay the cleverness of the scheme from the Zionists' viewpoint: by settling Israeli Arabs on the refugees' property, these will be made willynilly into defenders of the robbery against their people, Arabs against Arabs. But of course the Israeli Arabs regard the stolen property as stolen property, and their disinclination to take it is not hard to understand.

From this point, the rest of the script is acted out: The government can now point to the recalcitrants as holding up that measure of Justice which the land-robbery law was designed to vouchsafe, and Zionists can inspire articles everywhere to the effect that this shows, does it not, that the Israeli Arabs are all fifth-columnists who are waiting bloodthirstily for another round of foreign invasion.

In this connection, Dr. Peretz mentions that "The military discovered that often Arabs within Israel, after agreeing to use land of refugees who fled to the Arab States, made illegal payments to the former property owners across the border."[59] One sees that the Israeli Arabs even tried to square it in their own way, at their own expense; but of course such "treasonous" goings-on could not be permitted by the state.

TO COME BACK to our *Haaretz* writer, his discussion of the situation continues with two other facets of the picture:

> But it is doubtful whether this reason alone, which the authorities are powerless to remove, would have prevented the DPs for any length of time from agreeing to resettle even on absentee lands, were it not for some additional delaying factors for which the Government alone is responsible: the endless procrastination, the lack of good will on the part of the responsible officials, the multiplicity of administrative agencies, the bureaucratic confusion which baffles the Arab fellah.
>
> And even when he had finally overcome all these difficulties, the fellah finds out that the Development Agency would grant him no more than 25 dunams of non-irrigated land, the balance of the compensation being paid in money—a few tens of pounds per dunam. So he asks: The money will be spent pretty soon, and how am I supposed to feed my large family from 25 dunums of barren soil?
>
> And thus the ugly affair drags on month after month, year in year out, to this very day, and the ominous challenge it poses to the moral character of Israel

With regard to "the lack of good will" mentioned by *Haaretz,* we may also note the statement by Dr. Peretz that "Most Israeli Arabs declare that even after winning court cases against the Custodian, they failed to receive adequate compensation for their losses."[60]

Dr. Peretz goes on to mention, like others, that the government explains Arab reluctance to take land on the ground that they fear reprisals in a "second round," and then he adds:

> A more plausible explanation might be that farms offered in exchange for "absentee" property are usually granted on short-term leases and in more or less standard-sized holdings which do not necessarily correspond to the amount of land requisitioned.

This point about leasing rather than giving the land is, then, still another reason for the Arabs' reluctance to accept the law's settlement. (A little more on this question below.)

And finally, as another reason, not quite covered in all that we have given so far, is this one, perhaps the simplest of all: "Many of them avoid filing their claims on the ground that this would be tantampunt to signing away their lands..."[61] as indeed it would; and so they hope against hope for real justice.

> In this way the above-mentioned law achieved three aims at one time: It established order at home; there are no more illegal land-grabs in Israel; everything is now legal. In addition, the Israel government can now make a show to the world of its decency and justice toward the Arab owners of land which was stolen for "development and settlement." And in addition to all this, the state retains the entire compensation, both the money and the land.[62]

That is a harsh summary from the pen of an Israeli *anti*-Zionist, M. Stein, but it is in conformity with the facts in the case of the uncompensated "present absentees."

4

> "It gives you a queer turn," said one of the [UN] officials who visited the DP camps in Germany and who now works in the steaming, unsanitary camps into which these sorrowful victims of the Palestinian conflict [the Arab refugees] are herded. "If you close your eyes and listen to them, you believe you are back in Bavaria. You ask them where they want to settle, Transjordan, Egypt, Syria, just the way we used to ask the Jews in Germany if they wanted to go to the United States or to South America or to England, and the answer is always the same—'Palestine . . . Palestine . . . Palestine,' exactly as it was in Germany." He shook his head at the overlapping and repetitive quality of agony in our century.
>
> IRWIN SHAW: Report on Israel

THERE REMAIN a few aspects of the land-robbery still to be noted.

The 1950 law provided certain circumstances under which absentee property could be released back to its Arab owner. Did this ever happen? In some cases, but then mostly in the case of urban property like houses—rather than agricultural land, which was the main prize desired from the spoliation of the Arabs.

Hal Lehrman writes, discussing serious criticisms made not only by Arabs but also by Israeli Jews whom he talked to:

> The Custodian of Arab Property was empowered by law to exempt absentees who had left their residences for valid reasons, but such exemption, it was asserted, was sparingly given and only in exchange for large fees.[63]

Dr. Peretz writes, referring to the time in November 1949 when Finance Minister Eliezer Kaplan answered charges in a Knesset debate:

> The government classified tens of thousands of Israel Arabs as absentee. But in urban areas only 400 residents of

Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem who had never left the country recovered some of their property, according to Kaplan. The non-urban property of "several score" Arabs was also released. The Custodian issued a total of 209 certificates releasing property to its Arab owners. Maintenance grants from the income of absentee property were made by the Custodian to "several families of absentees in Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem." There were also a few instances in which merchandise was returned to Arabs after they proved their ownership.[64]

And later:

In urban areas the Custodian returned over 2000 dwellings to their Arab owners who had been classified as "absentees" by 1953.[65]

The *Jerusalem Post* reported on October 10, 1952 that, as of August 1, 828 houses, 276 plots, 22,127 dunams of land were returned upon the recommendation of the Committee.[66]

And in those cases where a house *was* returned to an Arab owner, he might find himself stuck with a tenant in that house whose rent had been fixed by the Custodian, because it was "absentee"-owned, at a specially low level. The Jerusalem Rent Court handed down a ruling that the restored Arab owner could not raise that rent, even if only to the prevailing level.[67] One can have no quarrel with measures designed to keep rents down, especially for the benefit of arrivals from Europe's DP camps, but this was a measure which automatically discriminated against Arabs only, and did not affect Jewish landlords.

NEXT: WE HAVE already mentioned that the government, in allocating compensatory land, tended to give it to Arabs only on lease, rather than outright. In fact—

In many areas the paradoxical situation arose in which the Custodian rented "absentee" property to its original owners. All the Arabs of Kfar Ilit near Nazareth were declared "absentees," although half of them had never left, not even during the fighting which occurred in the village. After the war, those who remained were forced to pay rent to the Custodian for the use of their own lands.[68]

Truly a fantastic situation, in which "absentees" are so thoroughly present that they are kindly permitted to rent their own land from those who stole it, and where the land itself is so far from being urgently needed for "development and settlement" that, indeed, there is no one to cultivate it except the very Arabs who have been dispossessed of it.... As Dr. Peretz explains when he mentions that the Custodian at one point leased 100,000 dunams to Arabs:

The move resulted from pressure by the Arab minority, Jewish political groups sympathetic to the minority, *and government failure to recruit enough Jewish settlers* to farm all cultivable absentee land. About 5000 Arab families—between 25,000 and 30,000 people—in nearly 100 villages were each granted yearly leases of 20 dunams. *In most cases the land was leased in exchange for property commandeered by the Custodian.*[69] [Italics added.]

If it is a matter of compensating for property "commandeered" by the Custodian, why then isn't the land given outright, rather than leased? The answer suggests itself: as long as the land is only leased, the Arab protest is temporarily stilled but the land itself still belongs to Jews and the Arab tillers can always be eventually squeezed out. Thus the authorities reason, for the land-grab is not over; but meanwhile the state badly needs the food and crops which will be raised by these Arab lease-holders.

The Mapai-affiliated Arab deputy Masad Qasis, in his complaints against the 1953 law in the Knesset,

strongly opposed compensation in the form of leases for land previously owned by Arabs on the grounds that it would give the government unusual powers over former Arab landowners....

He accused the government and various institutions of holding property illegally and unjustly for other than security or development reasons and wanted to confine their power to requisition of Arab lands which were either actually settled, or used for security purposes. Although the government prevented Arabs from securing ownership of their land, in many places it permitted them to lease their own holdings from the Custodian. Jewish collectives, on the other hand, were given land in some villages still legally inhabited by Arabs. This occurred in Shafa Amr, al-Hamma, and Evron. In such cases talk of development and security was "sheer deception." Qasis, therefore, proposed an unconditional return of the lands to their rightful owners.[70]

BUT IT IS NOT the objective motive of "development and settlement" that governs the over-all policy of the authorities. The question is: development and settlement *by whom?* all citizens of Israel without discrimination, or Jews only? What governs the real policy of the government is an ethnic chauvinism derived from the Zionist ideology. Hence every foot of ground owned by an Arab citizen of Israel has a question-mark over it. Cutting down the amount of land under Arab holding becomes an end in itself, even apart from the fact that the "Jewish State" is not going to move Jewish settlers who are squatting on stolen land. Thus Qasis' complaints went on:

Despite their large agricultural contribution, the government refused to restore the *untilled* land which belonged to the 30,000 Arab refugees who legally resided in Israel. The government often prevented Arab farmers from cultivating *unoccupied* land near their own villages. Much of the 300,000 dunams requisitioned under the Land Acquisition Law was *uncultivated.* If the government wanted these lands developed, Qasis thought it should return them to their owners.[71] [Italics added.]

Restrictions on Arab land-holding point toward an eventually *Araberrein* Israel. In February 1953 the Ichud raised this question of restrictions, among others, in a sharp attack on the government, in which it linked it with the leasing practices of the authorities:

Why did he [a government spokesman] announce to Arab "refugees" who wanted to set up a village in order to bring waste land under cultivation, *that "no new Arab villages were to be established in Israel?"* Why are lands leased to Arabs for only a one-year period? Does this not prevent capital investments for long-term cultivation and improvements? Do such acts not cause damage to an excellent agricultural area which supplies a considerable proportion of the products so much needed by our population and which save us large amounts of foreign currency?[72] [Italics added.]

The last remarks do indeed indicate economic motives which come into play to counter the Zionist-chauvinist ones. Arab agriculture *is* badly needed; Arab-owned or -cultivated land still has to be put up with, at least for the present. So Arab farmers even have to be aided to produce, today (as we intend to discuss in a future article). But no Arab can feel secure in this atmosphere.*

For the land-grab did not end with the 1953 legalization of all previous land-grabs. We have not even discussed—only barely mentioned, on page 13-14—one whole sector of this subject of how the Arab minority has

*An American liberal critic of Zionism, Christian Century editor Harold Fey, reported from Israel that "It is common practice to establish a Jewish land settlement close to an Arab village. If an Arab's sheep strays to land used by the Israelis, the Arab is arrested and may be fined 50 pounds. Encroachments on Arab land are frequent, beginning with the commons owned by the Arab village and extending now to privately owned land. Many Arab villages sit like a duck in a freezing pond, in the midst of a shrinking circle." (Fey, "Israeli Citizen, Class B," Christian Century, Jan. 13, 1954.)

been despoiled of its heritage. That is the method of the "double-play" which depends on expropriation by the military—the proclamation of certain lands as "security areas" for border defense and the mass eviction of the Arab population from these lands, so that they can be replaced with Jewish settlers.

But this fact raises a larger question —the military occupation under which 85 per cent of the Israeli Arab minority live. This military occupation and the land-grab are the two great and overshadowing realities under which the Israeli Arabs exist, beside which everything else is secondary. The military sector of the land-grab, therefore, will be considered as part of a future article on the military occupation as a whole.

SOME READERS may wonder: What possible justification do *Zionists* give for this wholesale robbery of a people? The question is an idle one, for the most part, since virtually all of Zionist literature, with few exceptions, is designed to deny and falsify the fact of the robbery itself. Zionist accounts of the land laws, while dissembling their real meaning and contents, repeat endlessly that the only losers are those bad fifth-columnist Arabs who fled to the enemy out of frothing hatred of the Jews and who are now only whooping it up for war against the state of Israel, etc., etc., etc.

It is therefore enough to establish the facts, as we have done here, to cut through these myths.

But another approach needs a word, since it is given considerable space in the book by the World Zionist-Revisionist leader Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem,* which is a down-the-line propaganda production for the Israel government position:

> Israel's Finance Minister, Eliezer Kaplan, stressed in the Knesset on November 23, 1949, that the Israel legislation on Arab abandoned property was patterned on that of India and Pakistan, who were confronted with similar problems growing out of the partition of India in 1947. That resulted in vast exchanges of population with the abandoning of enormous quantities of land and other property. Some 7,900,000 Moslems left India for Pakistan and simultaneously some 5,000,000 destitute Hindu and Sikh refugees arrived in India from Pakistan....
>
> These problems were substantially the same on the Indian subcontinent and in Israel. The legislation dealing with the matter was bound to be construed along similar lines.[73]

This attempt to establish an analogy with the India-Pakistan exchange of population requires a certain kind of boldness which one can admire. We can note first the question of the voluntary character of the exchange, though that will only get us into the official Zionist claim that all the Arab "absentees" fled voluntarily, etc.—a claim which we have already considered. More to the point, there was no *exchange* at all in the Palestine case, of any kind, voluntary or involuntary. The Israeli Arabs who are now refugees in the Arab states did not get—and are not offered—the property of Jews in those states who move into Israel. This exchange-analogy is a grim jest, quite apart from any criticism of what actually happened in the India-Pakistan operation.

The cream of the jest, however, is to be found a few pages ahead in Schechtman's book,[74] in a passage entirely unrelated to the exchange-analogy. There we find Schechtman echoing the indignant Israeli complaints against the action taken by Iraq in 1951 when that Arab state confiscated the property left behind by Jews leaving for Israel in a mass exodus of over 120,000. Tel-Aviv protested vigorously, and quite rightly. But according to the terms of the exchange-analogy, this was sort of the other half of the "exchange"!

BUT ATTEMPTS at propagandist justification like this are exceptional. For the most part it is simply a question of burying the truth. In his burning denunciation of the 1953 land law which we have quoted in its place, Dr. Shereshevsky of the Ichud proclaimed that "The Jewish people in the whole world" will know the truth and "will not put up with it. . . ." Unfortunately he was wrong. Most particularly in the United States, not only the Zionist press but the general Jewish press, with the general press mostly going along, has performed prodigies in propaganda and public relations to falsify and suppress any part of the truth, thus keeping it from the Jewish people and all other people.

But would "the Jewish people" put up with it if they knew the truth? Dr. Shereshevsky raises the question. It reminds us that the Ichud people, though sterling liberals and honest democrats, are still enmeshed in the Zionist ideology. "The Jewish people" is no monolithic entity that will or will not put up with it; it spreads over the political spectrum.

This is also what is disturbing about one of the constant refrains of those Israeli liberals who do tell the truth about the Arab minority. They tend to pass the guilt off onto the backs of "the Jewish people." The reader can see a typical example of this in the quotation from *Haaretz's* Moshe Keren on page 20-21: how could "the Jewish people" do this to "a helpless minority" when it has itself been the victim of robbery and exploitation and has so often vowed itself to righteousness and justice?

One must respect the motives of this breast-beating, but the content is distressing. It was not "the Jewish people" who did this. In other mouths, such a sweepingly false and slanderous accusation would sound sinister indeed. It was not "the Jewish people" but the Zionist authorities, the Zionist movement, and the Zionist government that bear the responsibility; and the difference is enormous.

Such sweeping attribution of guilt to a whole people, for crimes committed by some among them, is more familiar as a methodological habit of anti-Semites and other racists. It is dangerous. In the present case the conscientious Zionist liberals apply it to their own people, whom they love, whereas the anti-Semites apply it to an alien people whom they hate. This great difference bespeaks the virtues of the liberals, but the dangerous similarity bespeaks the pitfalls of the Zionist identification of all Jews as one nation and of world Jewry with the state of Israel. Here we touch upon that common axis from which Zionism and anti-Semitism branch off in opposite directions as bisymmetric phenomena.

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60. Peretz in Middle East Journal (n. 32).
61. Moshe Keren (n. 51).
62. Stein (n. 25).
63. Lehrman (n. 33), p. 260.
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A NOTE ON SOURCES

As before, it is the aim to document all important statements from sources which Zionists would recognize as being pro-Jewish rather than pro-Arab. Exceptions to this are clearly labeled in the text or reference notes, wherever necessary.

More than before, the present article refers most often to a basic work which is unfortunately still unpublished, though it has no near rival as the authoritative and scholarly work on the subjects covered. This is the Ph.D. thesis (Columbia, 1954) by Don Peretz, "Israel and the Arab Refugees," in two mimeographed volumes.

Since we lean so heavily on it, and on the same author's magazine articles, an introduction is in order. In viewpoint Dr. Peretz is a disciple of, and dedicates his book to, Judah L. Magnes, founder of the Ichud, a small group in Israel which is the only wing of the Zionist movement which still consistently stands for justice to the Arab people.

Peretz studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem till 1948; during the Palestine war, he was a correspondent for NBC; in 1949 he returned to Palestine as Quaker representative with the UN agency in the field; later he was Middle East media evaluator for the Voice of America. In 1952 he studied Israel and the Middle East on a Ford Foundation grant, leading to his thesis. More recently he has been an expert on Middle East affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Thanks are also due to Mr. David I. Marmor, director of research of the Israel Office of Information (N. Y.), for his cooperation in checking matters of fact and expressing his differences in matters of opinion and interpretation.

The Tel-Aviv newspaper Haaretz which is mentioned several times is the leading daily in Israel, sometimes called the "Times" of Israel, liberal in viewpoint. Its record of relative frankness on the Arab question is very exceptional.—H. D.

Resolution by the
Independent Socialist League

5
MARXISM AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

1. The barbarous depths to which a decaying capitalism can drag civilization finds its extreme example to date in the physical destruction of some six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, i.e., all but the total extinction of European Jewry.

The rising, world-wide tide of anti-Semitism in the period of capitalist decay again emphasizes the close inter-relationship between the progress of the democratic and socialist struggles of the working class and the liberties of all oppressed and proscribed peoples. The Jews of Western Europe were liberated from their ghetto-existence and their civil and economic disability by the French Revolution, which, though bourgeois in historical form, was achieved by the struggle of the urban and peasant masses and, in large measure, in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The rise of the modern working class and the development of the Socialist and labor movements further fortified these rights and carried them forward across Central and Eastern Europe, culminating with the Russian Revolution which liberated the millions of Jews from the Czarist ghettos and the periodic pogroms. With the growing inability of capitalism to maintain any kind of stable economic existence, the capitalist class finds all democratic forms and rights increasingly incompatible with their further rule. All the great conquests of the last two hundred years, not only those of the modern labor movement but those of the bourgeois democratic revolutions as well, fall victim one by one to the onslaught of capitalist-totalitarian reaction.

2. The struggle for the defense of the Jewish people, of their full economic, political and social equality and against all forms of anti-Semitism is, therefore, an integral part of the struggle in defense of democracy and civilization, a struggle which finds its only complete expression in the struggle for Socialism. This struggle against anti-Semitism is likewise of greatest importance in the efforts of the Workers Party to educate the American proletariat to the political significance of anti-Semitism, to its use by the native fascist movements and by sections of the bourgeoisie as a weapon against the working class.

3. The remnants of European Jewry find themselves today in a worse plight than that of any other war-torn people of Europe. Deprived of all earthly possessions, totally homeless, without means of a livelihood, in most instances bereft of relatives, friends and even families,

herded into Displaced Persons Camps, often little better than the concentration camps they survived, most Jews of Europe see no future in their old homelands and seek to emigrate into other lands to start life anew. The elementary democratic demand of free emigration and immigration, long part of every genuinely democratic program, must be most vigorously fought for in this specific case of the European Jews. All barriers against their immigration to the countries they choose must be broken down. For Socialists in the United States, in this the richest nation in the world and one having industrial and agricultural resources for a population many times the present size, this means, in the first place, the struggle against exclusion of Europe's Jews from *this* country. We must fight for the realization of the slogan, "Open the doors of the U.S.!" For Socialists in the United States, it means also exposing the policy of American imperialism which offers no other solution for the Jews of Europe than life in a Displaced Persons Camp in spite of all the pretentions of American imperialism to being the most liberal and inherently democratic state in the world.

4. The wave of anti-Semitism which followed the defeat of German labor by fascism and the victory of Hitler led to a tremendous resurgence of nationalistic sentiment among Jews all over the world. It seemed to millions of Jews that the struggle of Allied imperialism against Germany was at the same time a struggle against anti-Semitism. But this illusion has been rapidly disappearing as the remaining Jewish masses of Europe continue to feel the lash of anti-Semitism in the territories occupied by the victorious Allies and in the Allied nations themselves.

This growing Jewish nationalism has taken the form of a mass desire for a territory (in particular, Palestine) where the Jewish population might constitute a majority and thereby be able to develop its own life free from anti-Semitism. These aspirations are the legitimate, democratic yearnings of a people long subjected to oppression and discrimination.

It is an axiom for revolutionary socialists who alone can be consistent democrats that all peoples who desire to lead an independent national existence be given the opportunity to do so. Wherever such a national struggle, however, conflicts with the needs of the general revolutionary struggle against world imperialism and for the proletarian revolution which alone can guarantee real freedom for all peoples and provide the basis for a solution to the Jewish problem, that national struggle must be subordinated to the socialist struggle.

To pose the achievement of a Jewish state under capitalism as does the Zionist movement as the solution of the Jewish question is to pose a reactionary Utopia. The effect of the Zionist movement is to divert the struggle of the Jewish proletariat and the Jewish people as a whole from the class struggle of the entire working class of the countries they live in. The attempt to realize a Jewish state under capitalism is, at best, conceivable as a wretched adjunct of one of the imperialist empires. It is precisely because the Zionist aim is a reactionary Utopia that the practical policies of Zionism have a reactionary content. The aspirations of the Jewish people for a state of their own can only find its genuine realization as a Jewish Commonwealth in a World Socialist Federation.

5. Despite this political judgment of Zionism, it is still necessary for Marxists to take note of the tremendous desire that exists among Europe's Jews to settle in Palestine and take part in the building up of a Jewish community life which will afford them an economic existence and also shield them from the barbarous anti-Semitism to which they have been subjected. Their desire to go to Palestine has been continually frustrated by the opposition of the British imperialist régime, which conditions its immigration policy to its own reactionary political needs. It opens and closes the gates to Palestine (thereby playing with the very lives of tens of thousands of people), in accordance with its deliberate policy of maintaining and fostering Arab-Jewish hostility for the ultimate benefit of British rule. The struggle for the freedom of immigration is, therefore, today largely a struggle against the reactionary British barriers around Palestine. Our English comrades, together with the revolutionary Marxists of the United States and of Palestine, must become champions of the slogan of "Open the doors of Palestine!" to be achieved, not by bargaining with British imperialism, but by mass revolutionary struggle against it.

6. The Zionist movement has recently carried on a determined, world-wide struggle for free Jewish immigration into Palestine. While Marxists can give conditional and critical support to this fight, above all to those heroic Jewish youth in Palestine who have taken to direct action to break down the barriers to immigration, we at all times sharply condemn the reactionary political program to which the Zionists tie their fight for free immigration, i.e., the achievement of a Jewish majority and a Jewish state. The reactionary political character of the Zionist movement is revealed precisely in their demand for free *Jewish* immigration, while opposing free *Arab*

immigration into Palestine. Their fight is not motivated by a genuinely democratic and internationalist position but rather by a narrowly Jewish, nationalist position. This position finds its ultimately reactionary conclusion in their opposition to a Constituent Assembly for Palestine at the present time, on the grounds that the Jews do not yet constitute a majority! This position leads them to prefer continued British rule to a free Palestine with an Arab majority.

7. The problem of Palestine is not, in the first place, a problem of Arab-Jewish relations but rather a problem of British imperialist domination over both Arabs and Jews. The solution of the Palestinian problem must, therefore, begin with the struggle against British imperialist rule. This struggle proceeds under the slogan of "Out with the British! A free Palestine!" Not the British but only the inhabitants of Palestine can decide its future.

8. The struggle for a free Palestine must, therefore, be a struggle fought on the basis of Jewish-Arab unity. Every national and religious issue which Jews and Arabs permit themselves to be divided over is another prop for British rule. It is not a problem, today, of self-determination of Jews against Arab rule or vice versa, but of Palestinian self-determination against British rule.

9. The slogan for a free Palestine finds its concrete political expression in the demand for the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly, elected by direct, secret, universal suffrage of men and women over 18. This demand must be the crowning political slogan for any genuinely democratic (not to speak of Socialist) program for Palestine today. The reactionary character of Zionism is seen precisely in their opposition to this slogan. From the extreme right wing to the most left, all Zionist tendencies stand united in opposition to a Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage *until* a Jewish majority is assured. Other slogans, such as "bi-national state" evade this question: Shall the majority of the people of Palestine have the right to decide democratically the fate of their own country through a Constituent Assembly? Not only does this position of Zionism make it an obvious tool of British imperialist policy but it plays into the hands of the most reactionary Arab nationalist elements. The latter use this reactionary role of Zionism as a means of assuring their own reactionary domination over the Arab masses and, thereby, to undermine all tendencies toward Arab-Jewish unity.

10. As demonstrated by every other democratic revolution of our epoch, the only class in Palestine that will prove itself capable of leading a thorough-going revolutionary struggle against British imperialism is the Palestinian proletariat. The proletarian class struggle against economic exploitation unites all toilers and serves as the bridge across all reactionary nationalist barriers. Under the political influence of a revolutionary Marxist party the Jewish and Arab workers will find their way to each other in a common economic and *political* struggle, directed against all exploiters and oppressors, British, Arab and Jewish. The inspiring unity of the Arab and Jewish railroad workers in their recent strike is an example of how the proletarian class struggle can cut through all national barriers. (The strike of the civil service employees which followed likewise demonstrated this.) The fact that the Jewish strikers received no support from the Jewish bourgeoisie and that the Arab strikers were viciously condemned by the Arab landed aristocracy on the grounds that they were forsaking the Arab national front, reveals how proletarian class action not only forges the unity of the Arab and Jewish masses from below, but also takes the national struggle out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and landowners and places it in the hands of the proletariat.

The organization of the Palestinian proletariat demands the fight against all attempts at setting up separate Jewish or Arab workers organizations. The trade unions and other working class organizations that are founded on the principle of the class struggle must encompass all workers, regardless of nationality. The organization of a specifically Jewish trade union movement by the "Socialist" Zionists is but another reactionary Zionist blow against genuine Arab-Jewish unity. The Palestinian workers organizations will, of course, guarantee the fullest freedom of Arabs and Jews in the use of their own language, in the conduct of meetings and will foster a bilingual workers press and literature.

11. As in every democratic revolution, the demands of the masses for political freedom take on real meaning only as they relate these to their economic needs, so the struggle for a free Palestine must be linked to the economic needs of the Arab and Jewish masses. The key slogan in such demands for Palestine must be the slogan of "Land to the peasants!" This slogan, like all demands directed against the privileged, possessing classes, strikes a blow at the British, Jewish and Arab interests simultaneously. The fight for "a free Palestine" and "land to the peasants" will guarantee the best possible road to a liberated Palestine in which the Arab majority preponderantly composed of landless peas-

ants and day-laborers, will wage an agrarian revolution against the Arab landowners, a struggle which will link up with the fight of the city and town proletariat against its capitalist oppressors. To the democratic demand of "land to the peasants" must be linked the transitional program of the Fourth International, as adapted to the specific economic conditions of Palestine.

12. The Workers Party warns all supporters of Palestinian freedom against the treacherous role of Russia in the struggles of national liberation and of the infamous role of the Stalinists everywhere in relation to the Jewish question and Palestine. Russia's interest in the Middle East is that of an imperialist rival of the British Empire. Russia will seek to exploit the differences in the Palestinian situation, not to advance any democratic cause, but to strengthen her own reactionary influence in that part of the world. Palestine's strategic location between the Iranian oil fields and the Mediterranean makes of it a natural pawn in the struggles of the great imperialist powers, and in this period, of special interest to Russia. Russia sought to enlist the support of world Jewry during her role as a war-ally of the United States and England against Germany. During this period, above all, in the light of the pro-Axis role of the Arab nationalist leaders, Russia sought to appear as the champion of the Jews. (This did not prevent the GPU from murdering Ehrlich and Alter and thousands of other Jewish anti-Stalinist Socialists.) Today, Russia seeks to curry favor with the reactionary Arab nationalists by appearing as the champion of the Arab world against British oppression. Nothing but disaster will result from either Jews or Arabs placing the slightest confidence in Russia's role in the Middle East.

The Workers Party likewise warns all supporters of Palestinian freedom against any faith in the "democratic" intentions of American imperialism in the Middle East. As with the other great powers, the United States is motivated by its economic interests in this part of the world, above all in oil resources. The somewhat obscure dealings of Roosevelt with the King of Saudi Arabia are an indication of the American role of playing both the pro-Arab and pro-Jewish game in this sphere in the interests of American political and economic domination. The United States seeks to garner the maximum advantages from the Palestinian situation, without, however, openly taking political responsibility. It prefers to leave the latter in the hands of the British, thus freeing itself from the obvious blame for the reactionary results of what is, in the last analysis, Anglo-*American* policy.

Neither Great Britain, nor Russia, nor the United States, nor the Zionist world organization, nor the League of Arab states, can be relied upon to conduct a fight on behalf of the interests of the Palestinian masses. This struggle must rest entirely in the hands of the masses. Their only real allies are to be found in the world struggle of the working classes and the colonial peoples.

HAL DRAPER

7
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE OR EXPANSION?

The UN, set up with fanfare to bring peace to the world, is again showing that it cannot prevent or halt war even by fifth-rate powers, such as the states of the Middle East—let alone war by the major warmakers who control its deliberations.

Compelled by the falling apart of the British Empire to recognize the independence of Palestine on paper, the UN drew a braided line through that tortured country of mingled nationality, erecting a state-boundary wall between already suspicious and jealous peoples. The Jews were assured of a state of their own—a state completely outfitted with salients, corridors, enclaves and angles sticking into the sides of the surrounding Arab world, with military lines athwart each other and commercial routes interpenetrating. The Jews cheered.

Then Washington ran out on its own partition plan, and the Arab leaders in turn were encouraged to proceed with their plans to enforce a Pan-Arab Palestine by force of arms in the interests of reactionary Arab landlordism. When this had already gone virtually to the point of invasion, the White House flipflopped, backtracked and reversed gear again in a precipitous recognition of the new Jewish state of Israel, again encouraging the Jews.

If meanwhile the British line was more consistent, it was more consistently directed toward fomenting the Pan-Arab reaction against the partition.

As long as the two peoples can thus be "sicced" against each other, the shadow of imperialist domination does not leave the scene. This is the end of UN policy.

If there is to be peace at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and if the Jews and Arabs are to live in fraternal unity, no one can look toward the United Nations or to American and British imperialism to bring this about. If there is to be peace, it has to be made by the peoples.

LABOR ACTION has made clear its belief that the partition of Palestine into two non-viable states was not calculated to achieve any real solution of the Palestine question, and cannot. We have reiterated that, before partition, the road to a basic solution lay only in the joint struggle by the socialist workers of the Jewish community together with the oppressed peasant masses of the Arabs to throw off the yoke of their common oppressor—BRITISH IMPERIALISM, based on the two ruling classes, Arab landlords and Zionist capitalists; and such Arab-Jewish cooperation from below COULD HAVE forged a united Palestine in the fire of anti-imperialist struggle.

Now that partition is virtually an accomplished fact, this basic road only takes a different form.

There is a war on—not yet full-scale war as this is written, but not far from it. The socialist working class of the Jewish territory has chosen to follow its Zionist leadership in achieving a separate state. As Marxist socialists—that is, as the only consistent democrats—we believe in and accept the democratic RIGHT of all peoples (including the Palestinian Jews) to self-determination, to work out their own destiny as they see fit. We said this even while advising against the EXERCISE of this right to the point of separation.

The politics from which the Pan-Arab war and threats of invasion flow is perfectly clear—the aim of depriving the Jews precisely of this RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. There is therefore not the slightest iota of common ground between the Arab landlords' opposition to partition and our own. While we are more firmly than ever of the opinion that the Jews' choice of separatism was a mistake and a setback for the only long-range solution, we believe that the imposition of "unity" upon Palestine by Abdullah, the Mufti or the Arab League would be a reactionary solution even more disastrous in its consequences AND A VIOLATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF PEOPLES.

To recognize the RIGHT of the Jews to self-determination, if it is not merely to be a pious obeisance to a formula, requires socialists also to recognize the right of the Jews to DEFEND their choice of separate national existence against any and all reactionary attempts to deprive them of that right, whether by Arab feudal lords or

UN imperialism. That is why we demanded recognition of Israel by the government, and why our British comrades particularly must demand similar action by the Labor government—as the concretization of the demand that the imperialists keep out. That is why we demand the lifting of the imperialist embargo on arms to the new Jewish state.

But the defense of Israel's right of self-determination against a reactionary war of invasion is only one side of the picture. Surely even the Zionist leaders do not believe that the "Palestine question" will be over if only Abdullah stops short of Israel's borders! On the contrary, it only enters a new stage. On the one hand, the Jews face the possibility of permanent guerrilla warfare, unending "border incidents," and above all, such permanent national hostility with the Arab world as would make national existence a nightmare for the Jewish splinter state. On the other hand, the unreproved demands by the Irgun and Stern gang for the conquest of all of Palestine raises the same question of future relations. For the socialist working class of Palestine that question is posed in terms of the present struggle as follows:

ARE THE JEWS—SOCIALIST WORKERS IN THEIR MAJORITY—TO WAGE A WAR OF NATIONALIST EXPANSIONISM, OR A REVOLUTIONARY WAR FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF PALESTINE FROM BELOW AGAINST BOTH THE JEWISH AND ARAB RULING CLASSES?

Today their struggle is a war of defense in the immediate circumstances. But tomorrow their struggle will inescapably be transformed into one or the other!

Before this question can be answered, the first illusion that needs destroying is the illusion that the splinter state of Israel can "go it alone." To be sure, given Haganah military victories, Israel can succeed in maintaining its formal independence. But world imperialism—British, American AND Russian—will remain on the scene with their fingers in the pie as long as the Balkanization of the Middle East continues.

The present situation in Palestine, the fruit of partition and the end product of Zionist policy in the country, can only continue to inflame nationalist hostility on both sides.

Even if the Arab legions' invasion is beaten back, the new state of Israel exists in an impossible economic and political situation. Its leaders will be forced to seek to fortify the stability of the new state in face of an encirclement of hatred—and they will look or aid and comfort only toward the imperialists. Such will be the inevitable drift for these "practical" politicians whose conception of statesmanship will consist of attempts to maneuver with the imperialist interests which hold Palestine in a net. And the price of such statesmanship can only be their willingness to act as an imperialist outpost in the Middle East for one or the other of the contending forces, hoping for protection and support in exchange.

Behind all this is the sorry fact that Israel CANNOT exist as a splinter state quivering in the flesh of the Arab Middle East without constant war-skirmishing or imperialist entanglements or both. This is guaranteed both for economic and political reasons.

This is why the only road that can save the Jews from subservience to imperialism or destruction by the Arabs is a course directed toward the REUNIFICATION OF PALESTINE on a basis which will permit the two peoples to live together in fraternal harmony. Such an outcome is simply impossible on the basis of the present policy of the Israeli leadership. And it is equally impossible as long as the Arab masses are under the unchallenged domination of their semi-feudal dynasties, landlords, effendis and militarists.

The reunification of Palestine and of the two peoples in it can take place only through a struggle FROM BELOW. The conditions for such a struggle are present as they were before partition—the class struggle within Jewish society, and the grinding exploitation of the Arab peasants by their lords and masters.

We believe that the main (not exclusive, but the main) responsibility for taking the initiative in this direction lies with the *Jewish* workers—precisely because, as the Zionist leaders boast on any occasion, it is the Jews who are the more advanced socially and culturally, because it is they who claim to be socialists, etc.

While opposing any attempt by the Arab landlord regimes to overthrow the Jewish state and impose their own reactionary sway on the whole land, it is the duty of real socialists in Israel to fight for a policy, a program and a government of the working people which CAN bring about such reunification instead of deepening the nationalist gulf.

The key to such a program is in the first place the policy of the people of Israel toward the Arabs NOW WITHIN THEIR OWN BORDERS. Israel must demonstrate that they are fighting NOT AGAINST THE ARAB PEOPLE BUT AGAINST THE ARAB DYNASTS AND LANDLORDS who are also the oppressors of the Arab people themselves. It must demonstrate that it seeks the alliance of the Arab masses against their own exploiters—an alliance of classes.

It can demonstrate this only by sharply reversing the whole Zionist policy toward the Arab people—accepting them as equals and collaborators in the building up, not of a JEWISH state, but of a BI-NATIONAL STATE. We use the term "bi-national" (which has been used with various senses) to designate merely the aim of a state which is the home of TWO peoples and comports itself as such, the forms to be worked out in common agreement.

Complete equal rights to the Arabs within the state of Israel; equality, not Jim Crow, in the Jewish-controlled trade unions; the abandonment of the economic nationalism which has reigned in the Jewish community hitherto; the constitutional AND de facto guarantee of the Arabs' fully recognized status as a national people—here are the elementary beginnings of such a program in Israel which can demonstrate in action the basis for a reunited Palestine.

Only such a government in Israel could seek to stir up the Arab masses of the invading nations against their own oppressors, raising in the first place its sympathy with the demand for LAND TO THE ARAB FELLAHEEN and the other social interests of the submerged mass of the Arab semi-feudal world.

Such a state, which appears in the Middle East not as the representative of Jewish nationalist chauvinism but of the social aspirations of all the people, Jewish and Arab, could fight for a reunified Palestine—and live.

Such is the program for a REVOLUTIONARY WAR against the Arab feudal lords, not a war of nationalist expansion against the Arab people. Such a program cannot be expected from the present rightist government of Israel, dominated by the Jewish capitalist class and tailended by the bourgeois labor leaders of the Histadrut, which in the longer run can only stumble from disaster to stalemate to subservience under outside imperialism.

Such a program demands the fight for a WORKERS' GOVERNMENT in Israel as the vanguard of the future United Socialist States of the Middle East.

Without such a program all the heroic sacrifices of the Jewish people and all the military victories of the Haganah will not be able to make of Palestine anything but a death trap of the peoples and a happy hunting ground of revived imperialist influence.

By
Clovis Maksoud & Hal Draper

15
DEBATE ON ISRAEL WITH AN ARAB SOCIALIST LEADER

In 1954, Clovis Maksoud was one of the leaders of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon; his group later split off, toward a more extreme nationalist position allied with the Baath socialists. Crux of the debate is the Arabs' aim of destroying Israel as a state. Omitted are sections of both presentations bearing on other questions. This debate had been preceded in Labor Action by a June 7, 1954 article by Maksoud on Arab socialism, which had discussed Israel in part. — Ed.

THE ARAB SOCIALISTS' POSITION ON ISRAEL
by Clovis Maksoud

I would state most emphatically that the Arab reactionary ruling classes are, in one degree or another, a contributing factor to the failure of the Arabs to assert their legitimate rights in Palestine and outside of Palestine in the Near East. Where imperialist influence was most pronounced, readiness to struggle against the aggressive threat of Zionism was most reluctant.

The leadership of the Jordanian army was an instrument of British diplomacy in the Zionist-Arab conflict. The Saudi Arabian government hardly contributed any serious effort in the cause of the Arabs. It was the people of Palestine who since the Balfour declaration resisted the designs of the Zionist Agency. It was the volunteers of Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon who conducted the active resistance movement. In effect, it was a people's campaign. Prominent socialists like Michel Aflak, Akram, Hourani, Salah el Bitar, Abdulla Runciwi, Abdullah Nawwas, and Ali Naser el Deen were among the leaders.

They were not motivated by a hatred of the Jews. (Many Arab Jews played a prominent role in the development of Arab radical thought. Abbou Maddara is the most prominent in the early part of this century.) They were not moved by an anti-Semitic feeling. (Arabs themselves are Semitic). They were not seeking to indulge the Arab people in xenophobic adventures.

Their fight against Zionism was in reality *only a part of a much broader fight.* It was a struggle against imperialism with its Near Eastern agents—reaction and Zionism. Only in this framework can we understand the validity of the Arab socialist position on the question of Palestine.

INVALID JUSTIFICATIONS

There are some justifications for the Western socialist support for Israel. But these are justifications only if we admit their theoretical impotency and their incapacity for thorough and scientific examination of the emerging problems.

Support for Israel was a protest against discriminatory practices and the inhuman persecution suffered by the Jews in Nazi Germany and other places. In this respect it is symptomatic of a humanist heritage. In reacting to anti-Semitism we share a common outlook and disposition.

But to conceive of the state of Israel as being the answer is not comprehensible unless we admit the validity of the Zionist concepts. I shall return to this subject later. It is sufficient to state here that lessons drawn from history show how a well-organized entity could maneuver the agony of a persecuted racial or religious minority toward ends that are in the final analysis obstructive to a dynamic rehabilitation of the victims.

A large number of socialists support Israel because of the pioneering achievements of some cooperative institutions there. The collective farms and the cooperatives are a segment of a total picture. To allow an attraction to a part—a small part—to be sufficient ground for *active* support of the whole is to blind ourselves to the inherent deficiencies of the whole, and in the case of Israel, to its inherent dangers.

It is moreover a romantic rationalization that resolves the crisis of the Western socialist conscience. Because

of this, the European socialist closes his mind against seeing the whole picture of Zionism and the even bigger totality of the Near East, in order to prevent recurrence of the crisis.

In a way their conscience in these matters is exhausted. This "exhaustion" will not deter us from pressing the need for a true evaluation of the situation on their part.

QUESTIONS FOR SOCIALISTS

Have these socialists ever sincerely examined the meaning of the full impact of Zionism in the Arab world? Have they pressed to fight anti-Semitism at its roots — namely, by probing into the economic, psychological and political dislocations in their own countries? Did they ever consider that the *transplantation* of Jewish technical skill from Europe was the cause of this rapid advancement?

Did they ever challenge, as they should have done spontaneously, the widely held Zionist theory that Arabs were incapable of developing their areas? (I emphasize the term "spontaneously" because it is an elementary socialist attitude that no people is incapable of self-development if adequate opportunities are allowed.)

Have the Western socialists ever stopped to think that it was due to the imperialism of the West that the Arab developmental energies were channeled away in the anti-imperialist phase of our struggle?

Let me remind readers of one additional current misconception concerning the Near Eastern question: The fact that Arab governments are trying to outbid Israel in subservience to Western strategic interests. This might lead to certain "advantages" if we believe that Israel was an isolated problem and also the unique serious problem concerning the Arabs. This is not true. Also, this irrational position, taken by certain Arab circles, notably around the intellectuals of the American University of Beirut [Lebanon], does not reflect the attitude of all socialist and democratic nationalists in the Arab world. As a matter of fact, it is prejudicial to our interests and to the unfolding of inherent aspirations and the release of our revolutionary forces. Therefore it is incorrect, and it is being fought vigorously.

Our opposition to the Middle East Security Pact, and the recent shooting by the police in Beirut of two socialist students, are only a few examples of our awareness that our anti-Israel position is but a part of our struggle against imperialism and the bipolarization of power in the world.

Now I shall come to the points raised by the resolution of the ISL on Zionism, Israel and the Jewish question (published in the July-August 1951 issue of the *New International*) and by the editorial in *Labor Action* on June 7 last. The reflections above are intended to serve for a clearer understanding of what I shall have to say and an introduction to the Arab socialist attitude on the problem of Palestine.

The resolution of the ISL stated that ". . . the Arab effendis demanded that the Jewish people, hounded in Europe, be deprived of the right to found a new life in the country of their choice."* This is, in my opinion, a misleading statement for two basic reasons:

(1) It confines the active resistance to Zionism to a certain limited class (see earlier our reference to "effendis"), and denies the broader framework of popular feeling on this problem.

(2) It presupposes several unsocialist hypotheses:

(a) Acceptance of the Zionist theory that there is a basic *right* for Jews to find life in *the* country of their choice.

(b) It disregards the means by which this right is to be executed, and it denies the interests of the people in Palestine their sovereign right to admit or refuse these claims. In other words, *what is claimed by the resolution to be an act of Jewish "self-determination" is dependent for its fruition on an act of aggression and imposition.* Was resistance to this policy of imposition actually an exercise of Arab legitimate rights? Was it in reality an act of depriving self-determination on the part of the Jews? This is where the resolution gets into contradictions.

Self-determination presupposes the existence of a *national self*. This "self" has the inherent right to determine its destiny, taking into consideration the aspirations of the human components of this national self. Are the Jews a national entity? The socialist answer must be a categoric *no*.

And even if they were, is it a legitimate act of self-determination that their "choice of a country" means deprivation of the inhabitants of that country of their rights to live in it? But even more important, is it to the best interests of socialist and democratic development in the Near East that a "national" state be set up in spite of the will and interests of the people of the area? Is it correct for the socialists to sanction even the establishment of Israel, even though it is not expansionist, and therefore consecrate the disruptive influences in the Arab world which for the last 40 years' imperialism have been attempting to break the unity and cohesion of the area?

We, the Arab socialists, say *no*.

It seems to us that the "pro-war" position of the resolution (ibid., p. 227) and its advocacy of no embargo of arms to Israel because of the Arab states' depriving the Jews of the right to exercise self-determination is, in view of our definition of the terms, un-

socialist and a dangerous precedent that was set up. It was morally wrong. It was, in view of the ISL's anti-Zionist record, a decision that stemmed from an error of judgment and no comprehension of the Arab case. It was, moreover, an acceptance of the appearance of Arab resistance for the real.

WHAT JEWS ARE MEANT?

Admitting that the ISL was correct in stating that the Arabs were depriving the Jews of exercising their act of self-determination, the question which the resolution did not answer was: which Jews have this right? In other words, what Jews belong to this national self? or what category of Jews? Is it every Jew? *Labor Action*, organ of the ISL, has repeatedly said no. Then what are the criteria that entitle a Jew to belong to the Jewish national self? In the resolution there is no answer.

In reality, there can be no answer unles one is willing to accept the modified Zionist thesis. It is stated that persecution and cultural background are sufficient to draw the ties that constitute a national entity. But cultural unity would draw *all* Jews into the framework of the Jewish nation; persecution of a religious minority does not entitle the minority to form a "national" home. This would be a dangerous precedent and will undermine the struggle for the elimination of the causes that make persecution possible.

If the Jews that are meant are those who were in the Arab world, and who are Arabs, then their claim to residence cannot be challenged and must not be questioned. The Arab socialists do not, and will not, accept the fact that they cease to be Arabs. Any discrimination against them will not be allowed. Persecution of these Arab minorities will be vigorously fought.

Arab Jews are not the only religious minority in the Arab world. Do these Jews (or, for that matter, the Arab Christians, Druzes, etc.) have the right of self-determination (in the manner it was defined in this article)? The answer is also no.

The socialist position on this question cannot be compromised. *To conceive of minorities as scapegoats has its roots not in inherent psychological dispositions of a majority but in the political and economic maladjustments. The responsibility of the socialists* is not to admit such dispositions as "natural" and therefore seek a "solution" to it outside of the context where the problem arises; the responsibility lies in preventing the recurrence of such tendencies by eliminating their causes.

In stating that the Jews have a right to a country of "their choice," the question arises, in view of the fact that their choice has been Palestine, as to whether they had a right to Palestine. If so, why? In view of the overwhelming impact of Zionist propaganda, the question seems to be irrelevant to many. By accepting this fundamental Zionist premise—and it is definitely a Zionist premise—a socialist anti-Zionist position seems to us untenable.

To accept this concept of a "Jewish right to Palestine" is to bring Zionism to the realm of being an aspect of controversy the solution of which must be based on compromise. This seems to me to be the position of the ISL resolution when it supports the Israeli "defensive war" with no support to political Zionism.

It is on this point that misunderstanding between us and the ISL is most apparent, namely, the insistence on the part of the ISL to distinguish between Zionism and the state of Israel. This is apparent in the *LA* editorial of June 7.

The analogy—of being anti-Stalinist and not anti-Russian—with anti-Zionism is incorrect. Communism (Stalinism) is a system of government; it is a blueprint for organizing society. It is therefore institutional. It has policies and methods which are devised to further their concepts and their ideas. Whether these ideas or the Communist system is valid or not is not for me to discuss here. But the opponents of this system must distinguish between the structural, institutional and methodological features of Communism, or for that matter any other system, and the people who live under that system.

As to the Zionist question, the problem is different. Zionism is not an institutional or organizational formula. It is not a theory of how a state ought to be run or the economy organized. It is a movement to create a state for a "Jewish nation."

In other words, Israel is the fruition — partial fruition — of the Zionist movement. Israel, the *sovereign* and independent *state*, is the culmination of Zionism. This is not a philosophy of life or a phase of political and economic theory. It is a movement which considers the salvation of the Jews to be in the creation of a separate Jewish state in Palestine. It is the equation of Judaism with the existence of a mystical myth of "Jewish nationalism." In this respect, it is a threat to the Jews and to the Arabs. It is, above all, from a socialist viewpoint, an escape from political and moral responsibility.

But it is important to distinguish between Jews and Israelis (in the sense of Israel being a state). *LA* in many recent issues has clearly pointed this out, but in its June 7 editorial seems to be seeking to make an exception of the Jews in Israel. In taking a correct theoretical stand, exceptions undermine the correctness.

Though clear opposition to Zionist chauvinism is quite evident in issues of *LA*, the acceptance of the state of Israel in its present boundaries is acceptance of the basic Zionist theory, namely, the need for the creation of a Jewish state. To fight the intolerance and

expansionism of the Israeli government is simply to fight the excesses of Zionism, which excesses you correctly conceive as inherent in their movement.

But to struggle against excesses — expansionism, treatment of non-Jewish minorities — is, despite its importance, a relative struggle and a limited one. As a matter of fact, such limitation ought to be welcomed by intelligent Zionists. As long as only their excesses are controversial, and such excesses characterize the anti-Zionist position, then the validity of their fundamental doctrine would continue to remain unchallenged. In this manner they would not only narrow the targets of their critics but in terms of logic it would be difficult to prove that the geographical confines of Israel, given the validity of their basic thesis, are a fulfillment.

Briefly, the concept of a Jewish national self that is seeking realization is a fluid concept. In its fluidity lies its danger. I cannot, therefore, distinguish Zionism from the right of Jewish self-determination.

Does Israel, the independent and sovereign state, serve as a generator of a progressive and socialist revolutionary development, or does it serve as a deterrent?

This is a question that ought to concern not only Arab socialists but socialists everywhere.

The answer, we submit as socialists, is that the presence of the *sovereign* state of Israel acts as a deterrent to the fulfillment of the revolutionary aspirations of the Arab masses.

Not only does potential Zionist expansion militate against the release of Arab revolutionary reserves, but Israel's expansion is checked only by active interference of the three Western powers who signed the 1950 Tripartite Agreement. To maneuver the Arab revolutionary forces into a position of choosing between potential expansion of Zionism and imperialist intervention to prevent it, seems to us a disservice to the cause of socialism in the Near East. Should the socialists in Europe and America continue in their one-sided support for Israel, they will not only contribute to the perpetuation of reaction in this area, but they will, in the long run, weaken their position by supporting forces that sap their own strength and appeal, namely, imperialism.

The task of the Arab socialists is therefore to break the deadlock and disengage ourselves from this limited framework of choice. Our immediate task is to regain the initiative in the field of international relations in order to create a climate where *the two alternatives would be proved to be two phases of one.*

Arab socialists wonder why socialists in Europe and Ameriea—finding themselves supporting, as did the British Labor MPs, Sidney Silverman and R. H. S. Crossman, "stability" in the Near East to protect Israel—are completely indifferent to the consequences of "stability" in the Arab world?

The alternative in our view is the *emasculation of Israel's sovereignty*. This is a view that must be shared by every socialist.

As long as the Jews in Israel retain a sovereign, separate, isolated and independent existence, they will evolve interests which are existpathetic to those of the inhabitants of the area. In addition, and by virtue of this isolated existence, they will not only alienate themselves from the inhabitants' aspirations but, in preservation of this isolation, they will move in an opposite direction.

As the Arabs are in a revolutionary situation expressed in an articulate will to change the social, political and economic systems under which they live, *Israel in preserving its "national" identity would exercise a counter-revolutionary influence.* This will, parenthetically, entail the frustration and isolation of genuine socialist groups among the Jews either by direct suppression, as they will necessarily become "subversive" and divisive elements with regard to Zionism, or by limiting the mobility of socialist appeal in the emotional and sensational mobilization where Zionists are master engineers.

The emasculation of Israel's sovereignty will require positive action too.

The first step will be the resettlement of Arab refugees to their former homes in Palestine; also the resettlement of Arab Jews in their

homes in Yemen and Iraq with guarantees of their civil rights and reinstatement of their status.

The Jewish population in Palestine who lived there prior to the creation of Israel will be allowed cultural autonomy. The remaining inhabitants of Israel will be allowed to continue residence only in the light of the absorptive capacity of Palestine and the consideration of the human rights of the Palestinian population.

The remaining Jewish refugees cannot be considered an exclusive Arab obligation. They are an international obligation, as any victims of persecution ought to be. Some of the romantic Zionists who came as "pioneers" from their countries should not remain at all in Palestine, especially if they consider their stay there a matter of right. Socialists in the world should seek to liberalize their immigration laws *and the presumption that anti-Semitism is a psychological component of certain national attitudes must be abandoned.*

Therefore the Zionist myths must not continue to dominate Western socialist and liberal thinking. Their reactionary and racial premises and prejudices should be rejected.

The cultural autonomy of the Jews in Palestine will mean the reintegration of these inhabitants into the broader framework of Arab unity. They will not be the only religious minority. The Arabs have always proved their assimilating capacities. Arabs have also a heritage of tolerance. Kurds, Armenians, Greeks and European Jews in many Arab countries assimilated into the pattern of Arab society.

A social revolution is a negation of all religious and racial prejudices. It generates progressive dispositions, and transcends discriminatory arrogance that characterizes reactionary classes when their survival is in question. The revolutionary situation in the Arab world is a liberation movement. Though it is a liberation *from* an "other," the struggle itself has a purifying impact in the process.

Only where outside influences, endeavoring to exploit, seek to maintain permanent footholds in the area is the perversion of the socialist revolution possible. The perversion can be either the subversion of this tempo to Soviet designs or the derationalization of revolutionary impulses to succumb to anti-democratic forces similar in designs to the forces they claim to oppose. The success of these revolutionary and perverted direction is possible only by frustrating democratic socialism.

Israel is an integral part of a wider problem. In its present Zionist structure and sovereignty it will continue to be a source of tension.

Those who claim that the emasculation of Israel's sovereignty is "impractical" will have to face the justified Arab response that the maintenance and subsidization of Zionist sovereignty is also impractical. In my opinion the paramount interest of socialism should be the arbiter of this problem.

THE MISTAKES OF THE ARAB SOCIALISTS

by Hal Draper

In our present discussion of (and argument against) the Arab socialist view, the whole basis of the question will, I think, be quite different from that which Comrade Maksoud and his comrades are accustomed to meet and deal with.

As we see it, for one thing, ours is an attempt to develop a position from a *Marxist internationalist* standpoint. And above all, we approach the problem as *opponents* of Zionism and of Zionist ideology and politics.

As I read Comrade Maksoud's article, my feeling is that he has not appreciated the full force and potentialities of a socialist anti-Zionist position like ours, perhaps because of its unfamiliarity; and we will have to devote some space to presenting it *as an alternative to the Arab socialists' grievous mistake in calling for the overthrow of the state of Israel.*

That is what is in question here, and nothing else; although of course there is a long list of related ideas in dispute that lie behind such a conclusion.

Comrade Maksoud's conclusion is to demand "the emasculation of Israel's sovereignty," to do away with this state's "sovereign, separate, isolated and independent existence." Instead, the Palestinian Jews are to be given merely "cultural autonomy."

Plainly, it would be simpler to make clear that the state of Israel is to be conquered and crushed, by force of arms in a war, annexed to some Arab state or group of states, and thus wiped out. This is the "solution" to the Israel question of which Maksoud speaks.

We will argue that it is no "solution" at all, since it will solve nothing and mean merely the continuation of the present impasse in a different form. That it cannot bring the peace of which Maksoud speaks. That it will not save the Arab peoples from being pawns of imperialism. That it will not be the key to unlock the revolutionary energies of the Arabs, as Maksoud thinks.

In fact, we have here, I think, a typical example of bisymmetric mistakes. Maksoud has this in common with the Zionist ideology: the insistence that the fate of Israel as a state is inseparable from the fate of Zionism. His insistence that Israel must be forcibly everthrown is the "other side of the coin" of the Zionist-chauvinist concept of the "Jewish state" and policy of persecuting the Arab minority.

At any rate, that's the way we see it, and so will we argue. This bisymmetric pattern has certain inevitable consequences. It is well-nigh inevitable that we will be denounced by Zionists for even printing Maksoud's article. And I'm afraid, under the circumstances, that it was just as inevitable that Maksoud should wind up by charging that *we* are not really anti-Zionist (because we won't go for the overthrow of Israel); that we may be against Zionist "excesses" but accept "basic Zionist theory."

Thus Maksoud hurls into the same (Zionist) camp all those who would oppose his "solution" of war against Israel.

That is not an advisable thing for him to do.

If the Arab socialists insist that pro-Zionism is the only alternative to their call for war against Israel, they will surely help to convince a great many waverers that the Zionists are the preferable side.

Thus bisymmetric mistakes always feed on each other. (It works the other way too. When the Arab socialists meet only chauvinistic arguments against them, they are reinforced in their mistake.)

Here then is the central point at which we differ: We draw a firm line between (1) fighting Zionism, its ideology and politics; fighting against the Zionist politics which are the official policies of the state of Israel, and against the Zionist leadership which is the official government of the state of Israel; and (2) fighting to overthrow the state of Israel as such.

Now, this distinction is simple as ABC. It may be wrong in Maksoud's eyes. It may be a mistake in his opinion. He has a right to argue that we should be against both, both Zionism and the state of Israel as such. But he should not close his eyes to the fact that this distinction must be made.

Yet he insists on doing so. On June 7 last, we had explained the difference by referring to an analogy with Stalinist Russia. We stressed that there was a big difference between being *anti-Stalinist* and *anti-Russian*. (Or being *anti-Nazi* and *anti-German*). So also, we said, one must not mix up *anti-Zionist* and *anti-Israel*, in exactly the same sense.

In each case, it is plain, you have a political movement (with its accompanying ideology; philosophy, program, institutions, "organizational formulas," economic theories, etc.) and at a given time this political movement (Stalinism, Nazism, Zionism) is in control of a state—to the disadvantage of the people of that state.

Everybody knows how easy it has been for reactionary varieties of "anti-Communism" to pass over into anti-Russian fulminations. It was easy for anti-Nazism to mask a chauvinistic anti-Germanism, and it does so to this day all over Britain and France and in the British Labor Party. It was easy for reactionaries, in the U. S. after Pearl Harbor, to whip up lynch sentiment against all Japanese people, even against Japanese-Americans, with filthy phrases like "yellow monkeys."

In the case under discussion, we also have a relationship between a *state* and a political movement which dominates and controls its government today. As we said, this political movement Zionism (like the analogy of Stalinism) has its own distinctive "philosophy," program, etc.

Maksoud rejects the comparison. I confess that I cannot even follow his reasoning at that point. With regard to Communism (Stalinism), he agrees that—

> ". . . the opponents of this system must distinguish between the structural, institutional and methodological features of Communism, or for that matter any other system, and the people who live under that system."

But it is "different" for Zionism, he argues—

> "Zionism is not an institutional or organizational formula. It is not a theory of how a state ought to be run or the economy organized. It is a movement to create a state for a 'Jewish nation.'"

But Stalinism is not an "institutional or organization formula" either—not simply, and not even mainly. To be sure, it has its characteristic "institutions" (like the

MVD) and its characteristic "organizational formulas" —but Zionism has its characteristic institutions, etc., also.

Above all, Stalinism arose as a political movement, with a certain political "philosophy," which captured a state. It proceeded to "create" a new state in its own image.

Of course, there are several thousand differences between Stalinism and Zionism which could be mentioned to confuse the analogy; but none of them are relevant to the very, very simple point:

It is possible to be anti-Stalinist without being anti-Russian. It is possible to be anti-Nazi without being anti-German. It is possible to be anti-Zionist without being anti-Israel.

When Comrade Maksoud denies *this*, then we feel that he is failing to see the very problem, let alone the correct socialist solution to it.

If he denies that it is even *possible* to be anti-Zionist without being for the overthrow of Israel, then it is indeed difficult for him to grapple with the issues as they present themselves to the minds of most socialists, and not only those with a pro-Zionist bias.*

*In fact, one could raise a question about what Maksoud means by Zionism. In his article in *LA* for June 7, he wrote: "Zionism is a movement which seeks to make religion the rallying factor of a nation. As such it is self-contained, mystical and intolerant of other religions or races (cf. the treatment of Arab minorities in Israel)."

It is just not true that Zionism makes religion the "rallying factor." Surely Maksoud must know that for the majority of Zionists it is a secular movement; many if not most Zionist leaders have even been atheists or agnostics, or at least quite unreligious; etc. Here Maksoud misses the whole point about the Zionist mystique and the Zionist form of Jewish nationalism: the Zionist looks on Jewry as being united not by their religion (if any) but by their inherent Jewish "nationality," and this goes for all Jews everywhere by virtue of birth and "tribal" blood.

And Zionism is not *necessarily* intolerant of "other religions or races." Within Israel it does not advocate discrimination against Christians, for example. The one religion of which it is most intolerant is—reform-Judaism (and not Islam)! and that basically for reasons of state and not theology. Its disgraceful and criminal persecution of the Arab minority is based on political reasons; it is a political and social persecution, not a religious persecution.

Maksoud here sounds as if he thinks the Zionists are religious fanatics or zealots! Nothing could be further from the mark, or be a grosser misunderstanding of what the fight is all about.

In our view, this distinction between being anti-Zionist and anti-Israel is the nub; but we must still go on to discuss Comrade Maksoud's positive reasons for being in favor of wiping out Israel as a state. The first of these is bound up with his argument that Israel had no right to existence in the first place.

At this point Comrade Maksoud's article presented a rebuttal to the ISL resolutions, which we had sent him for his information. But his presentation of our position was both inaccurate and inadequate, we think. In any case, it will be useful to sketch our point of view in at this stage of the argument. As we see it, Maksoud's error will be most apparent when it is seen on the background of our own approach to the question.

●

Zionism and Imperialism

We have always been opposed to the Zionist program of setting up a "Jewish state" by carving it out of another people's country (Palestine) against the will of the latter.

During most of the history of Zionism, it has sought to become the willing tool of some imperialist exploiter who would foist the Zionist aim upon Palestine for its own imperialist reasons. Zionism began in the 19th century by offering itself to Turkey in that role. After the Balfour Declaration it willingly prostituted itself to British imperialism, in the hope that the lion would set up its "Jewish state" as a fortress for the empire.

During most of its history, what it had to aim at was the setting up of a rule by a Jewish minority over an Arab majority, the Jewish minority coming into power and staying in power as the tool of an outside imperialist force.

Therefore our resolution spoke of "the criminal policy of Zionism toward the Arabs, a policy which was based on the aim of minority rule by the Jews in Palestine under the wing of British imperialism."

This political character of Zionism was not changed by the events of the last two decades; but *at the side of the Zionists' reactionary aspirations there also developed a different, a new, an accompanying factor* which did not owe its motive force and impact to Zionism.

Our comrade Maksoud sees only the impact of Zionism. We would like to call his attention to this other explosive development.

This was the exterminationist fate which loomed before a whole people in Europe, the Jewish people.

First, there was the wholesale persecution of the Jews before the war. During the war there took place an event never before seen in the world—at least not in our civilized days—the unprecedented physical extermination of 6 million Jews. This was the Nazi "solution"

of the Jewish problem. Not only Germany became untenable: mass anti-Semitic persecution was spreading to Italy and to France under the Nazi occupation. Then after the war, a new wave of anti-Jewish persecution arose in and engulfed the Stalinist empire, the satellites as well as Russia itself.

A whole people was being murdered and driven out of Europe. Driven—where? Where could they go? Even fleeing for their lives, where could they flee?

Why to Palestine? asks Comrade Maksoud in effect. *This is a problem for the whole world, not just our responsibility. Why should we have to bear the burden alone?*

He is absolutely correct.

The one country that was indicated in the first place as a haven was not Palestine but the United States; not the Arabs' land but ours. Any socialist, any half-decent democrat, who failed to cry this out—Open the doors of the U. S. to the Jewish refugees!—was a fraud. Our resolution said:

> "The elementary democratic demand of free emigration and immigration, long part of every genuinely democratic program, must be most vigorously fought for in the specific case of the European Jews. All barriers to immigration *to the countries of their choice* must be broken down. For socialists in the U. S., the richest country in the world and the one capable of absorbing the largest population, this means the struggle against the exclusion of the Jews from *this* country. For this reason, independent socialists raised and continue to raise the slogan 'Open the doors of the U. S.!'"

We should like Comrade Maksoud to note that it has always been the elementary democratic duty of every genuine socialist to fight for this untrammeled right of free emigration and immigration, by anyone to "the country of his choice." It has been called into question in the socialist movement, historically, only by the extreme chauvinist wing.

The American socialist movement has gone through this. Before World war I, to its everlasting shame and disgrace, the American Socialist Party took the position of supporting the Oriental-exclusion laws. The same socialist leaders who led in this move were those who betrayed socialism in the later war, and who betrayed socialism daily in their reformist politics. They were chauvinists.

At that time the Socialist International repudiated the American SP position and called for the genuine socialist position. We stick with this socialist position.

We had another reason for raising the demand "Open the doors of the U. S." Not only because the U. S. is the richest country: but also because it happens to be the country *we* live in. Every decent socialist in (say) Britain would be equally duty-bound to demand "Open the doors of Britain," even though Britain is not as rich as the U. S. The same goes for every socialist in the world, bar none.

It is no argument to prove that the influx of such immigration might harm the standards or otherwise impair the situation of native labor. That was the rationale of the American SP chauvinists (mentioned above) and they were right up to a certain point. They were chauvinists nonetheless. If such immigration did not create such problems, then anyone (and not only socialist-internationalists) could easily come out for a humane and internationalist position.

We trust, then, that Comrade Maksoud now understands what we (at least) mean by the right of the Jews to go to "the country of their choice." It is a right we would fight for, for anyone, anytime. How much more so in view of the explosive situation we have barely sketched, the extermination of a people?

In this writer's opinion (though it can be mooted) by far the greatest portion of Europe's persecuted Jews would have preferred to come to the U. S. and not to Palestine, given free choice. The influx of Jews to Palestine was not primarily due to a sudden increase in the pro-Zionist sentiments of Jews, out of love for Zionism. But the U. S. banged its doors shut, while pretending to express its horror at the anti-Jewish crimes of *others*. Other countries banged the door. A steel ring of national boundaries encircled the Jews, while, for many of them, the need for sheer survival forced them or seemed to force them *outward*.

Something had to give.

International reaction forced the fleeing Jews into the bag set up by the Zionists. Here was one direction in which they could go with some outside help—the help and machinery set up by the Zionist movement. It was the path of least resistance for them, and the pressure could relieve itself (partly) only in this direction.

This is what set up the dynamic push behind the post-war influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

It is in this connection that we come to the passage in our resolution part of which Maksoud quoted, with obvious misunderstanding. The part which Maksoud quoted is italicized:

> "The post-war influx of European Jews into Palestine greatly exacerbated Arab-Jewish relations in the country. The Zionist leaders looked upon this influx of refugees as a means of imposing all-Jewish rule upon the whole country. *The Arab effendis demanded that the Jewish people, hounded in Europe, be deprived of the right to found a new life in the country of their choice.*"

It should be clear to Comrade Maksoud now that what

we are talking about is the right to free immigration. Just as we raised the demand "Open the doors of the U. S.," so also we believe it was the duty of socialists to support the right of Jews to immigrate to Palestine.

In our view, as in Maksoud's, it was a misfortune that the Jewish exodus was channelized into Palestine to the extent it was. That is one of the crimes for which world capitalism and imperialism ought to answer some day. But it was a *fact*, and not a Zionist plot.

The Zionists were able to take advantage of this anti-Semitic windfall—in general, Zionism has always fed on anti-Semitism—but the problem that was created had to be faced by socialists and everyone else. It could not be faced *merely* by yelling against Zionism.

We had a program. It was a proposal for a revolutionary solution. It was what we counterposed to the Zionist solution, on the one hand, and to the Arab states' policy on the other.

As concisely summarized in our resolution (directly following the last quotation given), it was:

> "The Marxist, firmly opposed to both, advocated a policy which would bring together the Arab and Jewish peoples in a joint fight against British imperialism in the first place, and, necessarily bound up with this, against Jewish capital and Arab landlordism, for a Palestine freed from all foreign rule and governed by a democratic Constituent Assembly based upon equal and universal suffrage.
>
> "Such a fight was desired least of all by the Jewish and Arab upper classes. In the course of a joint struggle from below, cemented by common national-revolutionary aims and common social interests, Marxists aimed for a free and independent state of Palestine, based on the coexistence of two equal peoples, with national and cultural rights and autonomy safeguarded for both. This was the only progressive solution of the Palestine question. It looked not only to revolutionary struggles in Palestine but to the upsurge of anti-imperialist and revolutionary strivings in the whole Near East, on the road to a Near East Federation of socialist republics."

This is highly compressed, and we shall have to come back to some points, but certain things should be immediately clear.

Against a "Jewish State"

In the first place, it should be plain that we oppose, above all, the basic idea of Zionism of building a "Jewish state." *The idea, the concept-aim of a "Jewish state" and all that it implies is central to the Zionist ideology.* As long as the people and government of Israel, following the Zionist road, continue to try to build Israel as a "Jewish state," there can be no peace between Jew and Arab. So we believe.

For this period when Palestine's imperialist controller was still Britain, which stood over both Jew and Arab, the class-oriented revolutionary proposal which we made was one which would have necessitated freeing the Jewish workers from the bonds of the Zionist ideology as well as mobilizing the Arab masses free from Arab landlordism.

There was an Arab majority in Palestine. A democratic Palestine ruled under universal suffrage meant a Palestine whose Arab majority would decide. This was anathema to every Zionist, and exactly what he would never accept. But on the other hand, it could be accepted by the Jewish masses only in the context of an entirely different relationship between the two peoples. Both sides would have to view the new independent state as the home of two peoples in which both were free.

As we saw it, such a development could come about only through the rise of revolutionary class-consciousness from below. As Maksoud well says in his own article, it is in times of revolutionary stress and uplift that men begin to think differently, and then everything is possible.

Of course, we did not have any illusions about the immediate "practicality" of this program. We knew very well that on both sides the minds of the people were stuffed with chauvinist antagonisms. It was long plain that some reactionary "solution" was more in the cards, and not a revolutionary solution that could have been possible only with the existence of advanced revolutionary-socialist movements in the region.

The "solution" that was pushed through was partition.

We were against the partition as a "solution." Our resolution said on this point:

> "For the Marxists, the partition was and is no solution for either the basic problem of Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine, or, still less, for the Jewish problem in the world. As against partition, we advocated a different course . . ." (as already discussed above).
>
> ". . . As compared with the program we advocated, partition represented a setback on the road to greater understanding and cooperation between the Jewish and Arab peoples: it did indeed lead to a bloody fratricidal war in which and after which national feelings were inflamed even more and state-boundary walls were set up between the two peoples."

And we were right, we believe, in our view that the partition was no solution. Time has shown that. But

then our resolution proceeds to make a point which we cannot emphasize too strongly to Maksoud:

> "But if partition and the subsequent setting up and consolidation of the new state of Israel did not and could not solve the basic problem, or advance its solution, *it did pose entirely new conditions under which that solution had to be sought.*"

From my point of view, I would repeat that to Maksoud a thousand times:

Partition was no solution. The setting up of Israel was no solution. Your program to destroy Israel would be no solution. The problem is how to bring together the Jewish and Arab peoples on a revolutionary democratic basis, and this problem has to be dealt with on the basis of the conditions that exist. Israel is a fact. Nothing will be gained by an Arab-Jewish war against it, whether it wins or loses. There is a way to bring peace and a united life to the Near East, but it is not as simple a way as the mere proposal, "war against Israel."

We have outlined the point of view of our resolution as a background for taking up Comrade Maksoud's arguments for war, and as the background for counterposing this other solution of which we speak.

As we see it, then, Comrade Maksoud is reluctant to take a square look at one whole side of the post-war impasse in Palestine. He can see clearly the reactionary contribution which Zionism made to this impasse. But he does not give weight to the force which we emphasized in the first part of this reply: the flight of the Jewish people from Europe, and the channelization of this struggle for sheer survival to Palestine.

An exhausted victim of shipwreck is swimming in burning waters. He tries to climb into a lifeboat. The lifeboat already has its quota. To take on another will not swamp it but it will make the fate of all in it so much the more precarious. "Why pick on our little boat?" say the possessors of the lifeboat indignantly, as they crack the newcomer over the head with an oar and throw him back into the water. . . .

Maybe that picture is not entirely fair, but it will serve to underline a point. The point is that the post-war plight of a desperate mass of Jews brought about a situation around Palestine which could not be met *simply* with denunciation of Zionism and in which the rights of the Arab peoples were not the *only* considerations for internationalist socialists.

We have already sketched the revolutionary solution which we proposed, revolutionary in the literal sense that it depended on revolutionary action from below among the Arab and Jewish masses. It was only in the context of such an approach that we had a right to advocate the *free immigration* of Jews not only to the U. S. and any other "country of their choice" but also to Palestine.

Here Comrade Maksoud does us a grave injustice. He quotes our statement that the Jews (like all other peoples, remember) have a "right" to immigrate ("to found a new life") in "the country of their choice." He then proceeds to transpose this to mean that according to us there is a "Jewish right to Palestine," and this naturally is exactly the Zionist claim. Therefore, the ISL holds "the concept of a 'Jewish right to Palestine'" and really accepts Zionism. . . .

The right of desperate Jews to find haven in Palestine or anywhere else is not their right to take that country away from its inhabitants. Contrariwise, if Maksoud rightly insists that there is no "Jewish right to Palestine," that does not mean that he must oppose Jewish immigration.

We know well enough why the Arabs link the two questions. It is no mystery. It is because Zionism linked them. The Zionists looked on unrestricted immigration as the means of gaining a formal Jewish majority in the country and thus getting into position to take it away from the Arabs.

The Arab opposition to immigration, and the Zionist calculations on immigration, were the two sides of the same coin. Both sides read: *Internecine war and hatred between the peoples—No Exit.*

The internationalist socialist attitude on free immigration had to be linked with the revolutionary solution of a bi-national Palestine.

The Arab solution was much simpler: *Let the Jews get out and stay out, and go inflict their plight on some other people,* who no doubt would feel the same way about it. The Zionist solution was also simple: *Take their country away from the Arabs.* The Zionist position was not, and never has been, founded on the specific post-war problem of uprooted Jewish masses. They merely demagogically utilized this appeal in order to further their own objective of taking Palestine away from its people. Thus, neither from the Arab side nor from the side of the Zionist leaders of the Jews could a solution be found.

Partition was the UN's attempted compromise between conflicting aims which could lead only to bitter-end war. Sections of Palestine were already inhabited mainly by Jews. Let these Jews have their own territories under their own state, separate from Arab Palestine, and maybe there will be peace.

The calculation was mistaken, and partition could not bring any real peace or any real solution. As already discussed, we were against partition as a "solution." But being against partition still didn't answer a different question:

Did the Palestinian Jews have a *right* to self-determination in their territories? We believed that the Palestinian Jews did have a right to decide that *they* wanted partition, even though in *our* opinion this was a wrong and bad choice.

Let us try to clear up the following questions about this "right to self-determination."

(1) Simple though it is, it is often important to drive home an easy distinction: there is a big difference between the RIGHT to self-determination and the wisdom of EXERCISING that right in any given case.

Sometimes people who have no difficulty in agreeing with this in the abstract have great difficulty in grasping it in a specific case where they are vigorously against the *exercise* of the right.

Take an American case in point: For a long time the Stalinists raised the demand in the U. S. for "self-determination for the American Negroes" in a certain "black belt" which they drew in maps through the Southern states. The CP made clear that it advocated this breakaway from the union.

Our movement has always ridiculed this demand. Only a handful of Stalinist Negroes have ever been for it. It never struck any response among the Negro people. We could explain why. We opposed the idea.

But that did not stop us from taking up a different question. We said clearly that *if* the Negro people ever came to favor this move, even against our advice to them, then we recognized their *right* to self-determination, even though we viewed it as a mistake.

(Is it theoretically possible that the American Negroes might come to such a pass? If the Negroes ever faced in the U. S. the gas-chamber horrors and concentration camps which the Jews passed through in Europe, who can deny the possibility?)

But all we want to do at this point is illustrate the idea of how we recognized the *right* to a self-determination *against which we advised.*

(2) "Which Jews have this right? Is it every Jew?" asks Maksoud, and he writes that our resolution did not answer this. This is strange, since our resolution has a specific passage on this very question.

Our resolution said that with regard to this problem of the right to self-determination—

> "(a) the problem concerns *not Jews or people of Jewish descent in the world as a whole,* but specifically the Jewish community in given territorial areas of Palestine, and (b) whatever the scientific-theoretical verdict might be for the Jews as a whole, it is obvious that the Palestinian Jewish community has acted and is acting *exactly* as if it were a national people, and this is enough for the purpose of determining a political program."

Isn't that perfectly clear? We (not the Zionists) are talking about a certain peculiar people in a certain territory, the *Palestinian* Jewish community.

(3) Maksoud asks further: Do the Jews constitute a "national self"? Are they a "national entity"? Also "what Jews belong to this national self?"

Now we are more or less acquainted with many decades of socialist and non-socialist argumentation over the question "Are the Jews a nation (or a race, etc.)?" What our resolution limits itself to pointing out is that this time-honored conondrum does not have to be settled in order to grapple with the question *we* raised.

For the question always referred to "the Jews" as a whole over the world. Maksoud still does so in his article. I am not at all sure what can be said about "the Jews" of the world collectively; I am not even sure that *anything* at all can be said that applies to this heterogeneous collectivity called "the Jews." The Zionist line of talk along these lines, in my opinion, boils down to a mystical tribalism, and is of no theoretical value whatsoever.

We were interested in the much more concrete question of the specific Jewish community situated on a certain territory in Palestine, and its right of self-determination *not as "Jews" in general* but as a certain community in the land.

This community, we pointed out, whatever its origins, had in fact developed to the point where it was demonstrably ACTING as a national people.

A question of Marxist method is in order here. One can dispute everlastingly whether a certain people constitute a "nation." One can usefully go over various criteria for nationhood, among the varying criteria which have been weighed by Marxists among others. Such theoretical discussion can be very good. But for Marxists above all others, the test of theory comes in life. If "theory" has told us that X is not a nation, but if this people acts historically and collectively in every way that a national people acts, then something is wrong with the theory, or else some important change has taken place which theory has not yet caught up with.

In the case of the Jews, I believe it was especially the latter that was true. On the other hand, a certain Jewish community (however transplanted) had in fact taken root in Palestine and developed a national physiognomy, *one which was even different from that of the immigrant Jews.* And on the other hand, tens and tens of thousands of European Jews were forcibly turned mentally into the channel of Jewish-national feeling by the simple fact that they were uprooted from every other national soil. Hitler had his victory.

Jewish-national feeling swarmed into the vacuum created in the minds of concentration-campsful of Jews. Hitlerism created Jewish nationalism in a way that Zionism by itself could never do.

In any case, all that our resolution points out (and it limits itself wisely) is that we as Marxists do not *impose* our schema about "who constitutes a nation" *upon facts*. It is sheer doctrinairism to counterpose some theory about nationhood, against the *fact* that the Palestinian Jewish community has acted exactly as if it were a national people.

This is not to derogate theory. I could discuss with Maksoud the theoretical criteria for Israeli nationhood. But I should like to point out that the development of Israeli nationalism (today an indisputable fact, reactionary as it often tends to be) is an historical event which a Marxist has reason to keep in mind in *renovating his theory*.

(4) Lastly, granted that this specific Jewish community in Palestine may be regarded like other ethnic communities situated in given territories and given the same rights, isnt their case different after all because of the way they got there? That is, since this Palestinian community was established and nourished by Zionism muscling in on Arab territory, aren't they still mere interlopers and invaders?

This is on pretty thin ice, when you start applying it to a whole people, settled in a land, and not merely a military garrison. What might we find out if we dug into the mode of arrival of various minority peoples in many countries?

The whites in South Africa, for example, are invaders and interlopers (in origin); but this undoubted fact hardly points to a solution of the racial problem there. We would not be in favor of throwing the racist whites back into the sea. We *are* in favor of ending the dictatorship of the white minority over the black and colored majority, and building a thoroughly democratic state where both races could live in harmony. (In South Africa too this objective can be won only through a *revolutionary* solution.) But if put up against it, we would have to recognize the right of the minority whites to "self-determination" in a sadly partitioned South Africa. . . .

In Palestine the invasion and affront is more recent. The wound is rawer. That is true. It is also one reason for the hellishly difficult dilemma of the region. But we can see no other socialist stand possible.

In summary for this section: this right to self-determination was a right (the exercise of which we disagreed with) of a Palestinian community territorially established and acting as a nation.

Israel has as much "right" to existence as Pakistan. The problem that we see is not whether Israel has a "right" to exist, but how all of the people of the region can live together.

Israel may have a "right" to exist, but its existence will be a hell for the Jews and a thorn in the flesh of the Arabs as long as it insists on being a Jewish ghetto in an Arab world.

Before Israel can find a modus vivendi with its neighbors, it must overcome its Zionist illusions and policies. The Jewish people of Israel must come to the realization that the country must be built as a bi-national state, with cultural autonomy and full equal political and social rights for both peoples. Zionist expansionism must be repudiated. Its anti-Arab measures must be reversed.

All of this requires an internal revolutionary rejection of Zionism's specific politics, whether it consciously takes the form of a repudiation of Zionism or (perhaps more likely) takes the form of a gradual abandonment of all of Zionism's conclusions.

A movement toward this objective, we believe, *can* be built in Israel, even if only small elements of it are present now. But what will never be built in Israel is any movement or even grouplet which will advocate giving up the country's independence. The "emasculation" of Israel's independence and sovereignty can be accomplished only by war, and then only perpetuated by armed force and terror.

A bi-national Israel is only a first step. We look to a larger aim: an independent federation of the Near East states which constitute an economic and geographical entity. We cannot venture to say whether such a federation can or will include all the Arab states, in line with the aims of Arab nationalism. We are very interested in what our Arab comrades write about this question. But we see the final solution to the Palestine question in federation.

We have written time and again that the genuine socialists in Israel—and we do not mean the hard-bitten Zionist chauvinists, some of whom call themselves socialists, who are betraying socialist principles—can make their great contribution to this end by fighting with such a program for an understanding with the Arab people and for Arab rights, in the first place for the rights of the Arabs in Israel itself. The relative monolithism of Israeli Zionist chauvinism hardens Arab chauvinism.

A Plea to Arab Socialists

But now we are addressing ourselves to Arab socialists. We tell them the same thing:

Only insofar as you show fight against the reactionary and chauvinist aims of the Arab governments, can you expect to awake and enflame courage and heart among Jewish socialists who want to break out of the Zionist trap! The responsibility is yours too. It belongs to the genuine socialists on both sides of the line.

You say that the destruction of Israel is necessary to bring peace. Can you really believe that? Do you believe

that even if the Israeli armies are crushed in a war by the Arab power, the Jewish population will settle down as Arab citizens? No, as always, the worst will be brought out on both sides, in a permament state of revolt and war and terrorism. What exactly will be solved, since you insist so strongly on having a "solution" and not only a "settlement"?

Comrade Maksoud wrote on June 7: "The presence of Israel as a state constitutes such a threat to the Arabs that all their attention is diverted away from foreign policy. The true interest of the Arabs in international affairs lies in pursuing a vigorous and positive neutralism, but the local area tensions prevent the effective expression of this interest and block the materialization of a unified Third Force movement in Asia. This movement is the only possible path toward peace. By obstructing it, Israel acts as an agent of war and imperialism."

We beg to submit that this is not socialist thinking, though we can readily believe that it has its appeal to the people. Does it mean, for example, that the existence of Israel leads the Arab regimes to truckle to the West in the hope of winning support against Israel? that this keeps the Arabs from joining some "Third Force movement"? that if Israel were only removed, the Arabs would become Third-Force and peace on earth would be attained?

That is self-delusion at best. In *every* other country, people have their own reasons for choosing between the war camps and lining up, hoping to gain some advantage, some "lesser evil," some profit. If Israel were to disappear, the Arab rulers would be no more for a real Third Camp than they are now. They would still have much to hope to gain from one side or the other; and in any case, the alternative is not some kind of illusory "neutrality" (even à la Nehru) but a positive dedication to international socialism. A strong Arab socialist movement can do this. But Comrade Maksoud continually keeps identifying the policy of the Arab socialists with that of the Arab regimes as a whole.

We would like to ask Comrade Maksoud and his colleagues: Granted that other Arabs, who are not socialists, are seduced by imperialism because of their hatred of Israel; but you socialists, you the vanguard, is it possible for you to fight for a line which is against every outside imperialism and at the same time extend the hand of friendship to anti-Zionist Israelis on a common program (not war)?

Why do YOU not swim against the stream and propose an anti-imperialist program for the Arab people, which will stimulate tendencies away from Zionist expansionism within Israel, which will promote revolutionization within Israel —and which will not tell the Israelis that their country has to be crushed in war?

Comrade Maksoud mentions that in the war against Israel it was the reactionary, anti-democratic, sometimes anti-Semitic, non-progressive elements who became vocal, while the "rational democratic forces . . . were maneuvered . . . to abstention." We did not quite grasp the explanation he gave for this. But it is a development that has been seen before. It often means that the socialists found themselves, in practice, traveling in the train of reaction, because of their lack of an independent revolutionary policy.

Comrade Maksoud's argument seems to say that the existence of Israel is counter-revolutionary in and of itself because the Arab's hatred of it diverts them from settling with their own rulers, diverts their revolutionary energies. But this is exactly the kind of situation in which socialists must act like a vanguard, not as echoes of mass prejudices and fears.

Here in the U. S. hatred and fears of Russia overlay and stifle class-consciousness and socialist aspirations. If the threat of Stalinism could be removed, an enormous weight would be lifted that now weighs down on the socialist movement. In this situation, there are not a few renegades who have concluded that it is wise for socialists to support the drive to World War III in order to settle with Russia. . . .

Arab war against Israel would no more solve the Palestine problem than World War III can solve the world crisis. It is the special task of the socialist vanguard not to go along with majority fears and prejudices but to boldly propose their revolutionary solutions and fight for them against the field. A movement which is seduced by imperialism because of Israel will be seduced in some other way if Israel is removed, for it has lost its socialist moorings.

We propose that the Arab socialists consider the program of a bi-national Palestine in a Near East federation, as the revolutionary alternative to endless war, and to this end organize genuine socialist forces on both sides of the Israeli-Arab border.

THE ARAB STATES

by Ian Birchall

ISRAEL is the agent of imperialism in the Middle East. Any struggle against imperialism in the Middle East must be a struggle against Israel. Yet in four successive confrontations (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973) the Arab states, despite apparent numerical superiority, have failed to inflict any lasting setback on the Israeli state. Partly this must be explained by the massive assistance given Israel by imperialism, but partly the explanation lies in the social nature and political strategy of the regimes fighting Israel, and in particular Egypt.

The rise of Arab nationalism in its modern form after the Second World War is closely related to the establishment of Israel. It was during the 1948 Palestine War that many young Egyptian army officers—notably one Major Nasser—became fully aware of the corruption and inefficiency of the regime of King Farouk. And four years later, in 1952, a group of 'Free Officers' staged a revolt which established a new regime, a regime which Nasser was soon to head.

The political programme of the 'Free Officers' was similar to that of many regimes in other parts of the underdeveloped world—a mixture of social reform and modernisation at home and anti-imperialism (much more violent in words than in deeds) in its foreign policy. The original 'six principles' of the Free Officers were: 'to liquidate colonialism'; 'to liquidate feudalism'; 'to put an end to the domination of capital over the government'; 'to install social equity'; 'to set up a powerful national army'; 'to establish a sound democratic life'.[1] The very vagueness of these formulae was their strength in the short term; in the longer term conflicts could hardly be avoided.

The 'installation of social equity' was in fact a slow and modest process. A number of health and welfare measures were taken which, in a country like Egypt, ridden with poverty and disease, marked a very significant advance. When Nasser came to power virtually every Egyptian child suffered from eye-disease; by the late sixties less than ten per cent were afflicted.

But the reforms did not challenge the basic structures of power and ownership in Egypt. The land reform, for example, limited land holdings to a maximum of 200 feddans (just over 200 acres). The modesty of this can be seen by the fact that, in 1952, the year of the land reform, 94 per cent of landowners held less than five feddans, and 75 per cent of land was in holdings of under fifty feddans.[2]

As for the working class, the new regime made it clear from the beginning that they were to have no active role in

the new order. 'On 12 August (1952) the workers in one of Egypt's largest spinning mills at Kafr el-Dawar near Alexandria rioted and seized control of the factory. Fearing that this action might lead to workers' uprisings throughout the country, the junta promptly sent in troops to take back control of the mill, arrested some 200 workers and, after a brief court-martial, hanged two of the leading agitators.'[3]

In the early years of the regime some improvements were made in workers' standards. But by the early sixties this had come to an end. As a prominent economist put it: 'During the past five years a lot has been done for the workers. Most of the new legislation has been in their favour. Now we have to reduce the costs of production in order to make our industries more competitive, which means there can be no new benefits for the workers for the time being.'[4]

Independent political organisation of workers was strictly forbidden. Whatever the complexion of his relation with Russia, Nasser attacked the Egyptian Communist Party viciously in words and deeds.[5]

The impact of Nasserism on the other Arab states of the Middle East was considerable, unleashing a whole series of revolutions and counter-revolutions. Among the most significant were the overthrow of the Iraqui monarchy in 1958 and the short-lived union of Egypt and Syria (1958-61). Nasser's rise was also a factor which inspired the Algerian revolt against French rule which began in 1954; though the French government's belief that an attack on Egypt in 1956 would strangle the Algerian struggle showed a total failure to understand the dynamics of national liberation.

The other variants of Arab nationalism, despite the bitter hostility which often divides them, share many of the same features as the Egyptian example. The Baath (Rebirth) movement, which has had considerable influence in Iraq and Syria, combines nationalism with sharp hostility to Marxism. One of the founders of the Baath, Michel Aflak, described Marxism as 'a Western ideology, foreign to everything that is Arab', into which Marx 'has breathed something of his vengeful Jewish spirit'.[6] In Iraq the land reform launched in imitation of Egypt's was a total failure,[7] and in Syria a decade of land reform left 50 per cent of the rural population landless.[8]

One Arab Marxist has analysed the basic features of the nationalist regimes as follows: 'Both the Baathi and the Nasserite regimes have this in common: they are the regimes of an embourgeoisified privileged minority of petit-bourgeois origin which has merged with the remnants of the old social order (bureaucrats, ex-managers of nationalised enterprises, etc) and which appropriates the national surplus product through its control over the bureaucratic-military machinery of the state . . . this privileged minority . . . unable to revolutionise the relations of production, especially in the countryside . . . has failed in the task of the primitive accumulation of capital—the pre-condition for development which requires, in the under-developed countries, drawing upon the abundantly available human labour power (which is basically a political question: mobilising the masses in whose interest socialism is built).'[9]

Meanwhile many parts of the Arab world, despite their opposition to Zionism, have not reached this nationalist stage. Saudi Arabia, despite its massive oil income, remains an old-style monarchy. All strikes and union organisations were banned following a big strike of oil-field workers in 1952; and despite claimed increases in educational spending, in 1970 only 10,000 boys and 700 girls were getting secondary education (out of a population estimated between three and eight million—the Saudi Arabian regime resists anything so modernistic as a census).[10]

Egypt and imperialism

SINCE NASSER and the other nationalist leaders could not mobilise the workers and peasants, they could not make a frontal attack on imperialism; their only hope for modernising the countries was to manoeuvre between the two world power blocs. Hence Nasser's much-vaunted 'neutralism', his friendship with Tito of Yugoslavia and his leading role in the 1955 Bandung Conference of non-aligned countries. In financial terms the manoeuvres paid off; between 1957 and 1969 Nasser received, in loans and credit facilities (excluding military credits), £E 482.9 million from Russia and other Eastern bloc states, and £E 782.5 million from non-Communist states.[11]

Nasser's relationship with Russia led less perceptive sources in the West to label him a 'Communist puppet'. In fact, as Nasser pointed out, soviet aid and arms were given without conditions—ie, the Russian leaders did not try to bargain for the release of Egyptian Communists languishing in Nasser's jails. More important, Russia could not be counted on to support any consistent anti-Zionist line. Russia supported the establishment of Israel, and has put constant pressure on the Arab states to recognise the Zionist state's right to exist. And during the recent war Russia allowed a higher level of Jewish emigration to Israel than in any previous month.[12]

But Nasser's strategy of friendship with Russia did not interfere with his policy of attempting to reach agreement with the USA. The USA has now become the dominant imperialist force in the Middle East; US firms control well over half the oil reserves, as against less than ten per cent before the Second World War. Nasser never tried to confront this imperialism head on, but rather to seek common interests with it.

Certainly US-Egyptian relations were punctuated by a number of sharp clashes (the dispute over the financing of the Aswan Dam in 1956, Egyptian support for the anti-Tshombe forces in the Congo in 1964, and the six-day war in 1967). But good relations were restored in a fairly short time on each occasion.

A leading Egyptian journalist, Hassanain Haykal, whose views are often seen to be an unofficial reflection of the regime's policies, went so far as to argue, in 1969, that the USA's real interests lay with Egypt, and that the struggle against Israel was necessary only to persuade the Americans of this fact. ' . . . the USA sees in Israel an instrument for attaining its aims in the area. No matter how far the Arabs go in their revolt against the US influence and how much they defy this influence, the US aims are guaranteed as long as Israel remains capable of intimidating the Arabs. If Israel's ability to intimidate becomes doubtful, US policy will have to seek another course. Israel has proved to the USA that for the time being it is more useful to it than the Arabs. Although

all the US interests in the Middle East lie with the Arabs, the USA continues to support Israel.'[13]

Likewise Nasser's strategy made him quite unable to fight consistently against reactionary forces elsewhere in the Arab world. In 1963, Colonel Aref overthrew the Kassem regime in Iraq in a coup which led to the murder of at least five thousand Communists and workers. Nasser hastened to stress the 'unity of aim' of the two regimes.'[14] The Cairo radio programme 'Enemies of God', intended for the anti-monarchist revolutionaries in Saudi Arabia, disappeared during the six days war in 1967 and never returned to the air.[15]

After Nasser's death in 1970, his successor, Sadat, accentuated the pro-American trends in Egyptian policy, even going so far as to make a dramatic if short-lived break with Russia. This was accompanied by a clamp-down at home on students, left-wing intellectuals and trade unionists. Sadat moved into King Farouk's old palace, and the new privileged classes began to wallow in luxury. As the satirical poet Agmed Nagm describes them:

'Sitting in large fast cars . . .
Thick pasty necks
Fat bellies
Gleaming skin
Obtuse minds
Soaring incomes and
Swelling paunches . . .'[16]

The struggle within

SADAT'S POLICIES met growing internal opposition, in particular massive demonstrations by students in January 1972 and again in January 1973. The demands raised by the students brought out very clearly the links between the class struggle at home, and the struggle against imperialism. The following extracts are from a statement issued by the Councils for Defence of Democracy and the Homeland, groups set up in the Universities in January 1973:

'. . . Prepare, organise, and arm the people in the belief that war – people's war – is the only way to liberate the occupied land and to deal with the possibility of imperialist attack.

'. . . Construct a real war economy, instead of just laying down slogans and bombast about it. This will be possible only by abolishing the privileges and expense accounts currently enjoyed by the higher strata of society, by setting upper limits on salaries (no more than ten times the minimum wage), by eliminating further expenditures on items that do not serve the struggle, by ending imports of luxury goods, and by eliminating imperialist investments in Egypt, particularly investments in banking and the free market.

'Extend complete support to all sections of the revolutionary Palestinian resistance. Lift all restrictions on the Palestinian movement, open the way for Egyptians to join in, and form popular support councils in the villages and cities, and at points of production.

'. . . The living standards of the poor classes of people must be raised; production workers must be granted appropriate compensation for the nature of their work; workers in the private sector must be given a day off with pay; working conditions must be improved, and the workers must be guaranteed security. For these reasons we support the workers' struggles in Helwan and Shubra el-Khaima, as well as all the union demands of the shipping workers and textile and cotton workers in Alexandria. We ask that they link their trade-union struggle to the political struggle. We condemn the repression, harassment, and firings that the noble working-class leaders are facing.'[17]

It is against this background of Arab states, afraid to mobilise the working masses at home and afraid of a full confrontation with imperialism, that the relation of the Arab states to the Palestinian struggle has to be understood.

The Arab regime most directly involved with the Palestinians, Jordan, is the one which has shown most willingness to collaborate with Israel. King Hussein, apart from a few lapses into pro-Arab positions, has shown himself a worthy heir to his grandfather Abdullah, who concluded an agreement with Israel under British auspices in 1948. Hussein could wish for no better tribute than this, from an Israeli Professor in 1967: 'Like very many Israelis I fervently desire an early arrangement with King Hussein of Jordan . . . The Israelis have genuine respect and a sneaking affection for the brave little King, and one can hear expressions of almost sympathetic regret that he should have made the terrible blunder he did.'[18]

But the other Arab states have also done their best to make sure that the Palestinian resistance movement was firmly under their political control. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, established by the Arab states in 1964, was aimed primarily at preventing Palestinian organisation from struggling independently. The Arab states, after haggling among themselves, appointed as leader of the PLO, Ahmad el Shukeiri, whose sole talent seemed to be anti-Jewish demagogy. The Palestine Liberation Army was firmly integrated into the Arab state armies and had no freedom of action.[19]

After the six days war in 1967 the PLO lost most of its credibility and the initiative was taken by the more genuine fedayin (meaning 'those who sacrifice themselves') of Al Fatah and other groupings. But even here the guerrillas took an ambiguous attitude to the Arab states. Yassir Arafat, leader of Al Fatah, said in an interview in 1969, 'We will not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab country that will not in its turn put obstacles in the way of our revolution or threaten its continuation.' Although other groups like The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, however, criticised the Arab bourgeoisie and saw itself as part of the 'world liberation movement',[20] they too were prepared to co-operate at different times with one or other of the Arab regimes.

In September 1970, King Hussein set out to show just how much he deserved the affection of the Israelis by launching a concerted attempt to exterminate the Palestinian guerrilla movement. In heavy fighting over five thousand people were killed. Time magazine subsequently alleged that the attack had been arranged at a secret meeting between Hussein and the Israeli Prime Minister.[21]

But it was not Hussein alone who took the responsibility for the massive attack on the guerrillas. The whole range of Arab states – with the very partial exception of Syria – stood by and took no action. They were more interested in trying

to negotiate the American-inspired Rogers Peace Plan, which would have recognised the Israeli state. The betrayal of the Arab states was spelt out by Ghassan Kannafani, one of the leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine:

'Let us recall the situation. On 23 July Nasser accepted the Rogers plan, and a week later the Jordanian government did so too. Once again the Palestinians were put on the shelf. If you read the Arab and international press between 23 July and 6 September, you will see that the Palestinian people were again being treated exactly as they were between 1948 and 1967. The Arab papers started writing about how 'heroic' the Palestinians are, but also how "paralysed" they were, and how there was no hope for these "brave heroes" ...

'... The Egyptian regime was one step removed from direct participation in this liquidation, since it had no direct contact with the Palestinians; it was in a safer position. The only way the Egyptian regime could help Hussein was by keeping silent: and that it did, to the extent that it could resist the pressure of the Arab masses. For the first three days of the fighting in September the Egyptian government, and all the other Arab governments were silent, because they thought that the resistance movement could not survive for more than three days. Then they were forced to move, because the people in the streets of Egypt, Syria and Lebanon were angry at the massacre; but the first five thousand Palestinian victims fell in Amman in silence, and no-one complained.'[22]

What was left of the guerrilla movement was driven into the dead end of spectacular but futile individual terrorism.

The repressive social order of the Arab states also weakens them in their struggle against Zionism because it makes them unable to exploit the contradictions in Israeli society. The whole of Israeli society is a creation of imperialism, and it would be quite wrong to believe it can be overthrown simply by its internal contradictions. But it would be equally wrong to claim that there is no class struggle in Israel. Israeli workers have a record of struggle and strike; in recent years the Oriental Jews, who suffer from severe discrimination, have begun to rebel; shortly before the outbreak of the recent conflict the 'Black Panthers' had achieved some success in the Histradut (trade union) elections.[23] An Arab movement with a clear class perspective could counterbalance Israel's military superiority by driving a wedge into her social conflicts.

The recent war against Israel marked no change in the line of Egypt and the Arab states; on the contrary, it showed their determination to continue along the same path. Sadat, despite his frequent bellicose speeches, went to war only after three years of trying to reach a settlement with the USA had failed. But the war was undertaken for quite limited aims, totally distinct from the aims of the Palestinian people. There was no attempt to mobilise the dispossessed masses of the Middle East, let alone the working class in the imperialist countries (such as the dockers at Leghorn in Italy who refused to load munitions for the US Sixth Fleet[24]).

The Al Fatah leadership, with some justification, were suspicious of Egyptian motives when first informed of the 1973 war, fearing a pretext for a new attack on them.[25] While they agreed to participate, the role of the fedayin was far from being the central one it could have been in a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. In Jordan, former fedayin who had fled after the 1970 massacre and tried to return during the course of the hostilities, were turned away by officials armed with a 'black list' of former 'terrorists'.[26]

At the time of writing it is not clear whether the war is over for the moment or not; what is clear is that no solution of the fundamental questions is possible. As the leader of the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Nayef Hawatmeh, put it: 'All imperialist-Zionist manoeuvres aimed at settling the Middle East conflict without taking account of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination are doomed to failure; only the Palestinian resistance is entitled to speak in the name of the Palestinian people which it represents and to decide its fate. We are not alone in the battle. All the progressive forces of the world support our just struggle.'[27]

As far as Egypt is concerned, the future pattern is already clear; the appointment of the well-known pro-American Ismail Fahmi as Foreign Secretary on 31 October indicates that Sadat will pursue his wooing of Washington. At the same time he will probably lose again the mass popularity he won during the days of fighting. The students, and possibly the workers, will again start to challenge the regime.

Meanwhile the announcement by both Al Fatah and the Democratic Front that they would be prepared to participate in negotiations for a compromise solution[28] may lead to further divergences within the Palestinian movement. Both individual terrorism and loving up to Arab statesmen are more and more clearly dead ends. The lesson to be drawn from the tragic losses and suffering of the last few weeks is that the only road to the overthrow of Zionism is the revolutionary overthrow of the Arab regimes.

Notes

1 See New Left Review 45, p69.
2 P Mansfield, Nasser's Egypt, Penguin 1969, pp46, 199.
3 Mansfield, op cit, p45.
4 Mansfield, op cit, p172.
5 For an account of the role of the CPs in Egypt and Iraq, see I H Birchall, Workers Against the Monolith, due out early next year, chapter 9.
6 New Left Review 45, p59.
7 M Adams, Chaos or Rebirth, BBC 1968, p65.
8 New Left Review 57, p80.
9 Fawwaz Trabulsi, New Left Review 57, pp79-80.
10 Cf Fred Halliday in New Left Review 80.
11 Mansfield, op cit, pp184-5 (the Egyptian pound is worth something less than the pound sterling).
12 Le Monde, 3 November.
13 Al Ahram March-April 1969; reproduced in W Laqueur (ed), The Israel-Arab Reader, Penguin 1970, pp501-2.
14 Mansfield, op cit, p66.
15 New Left Review 80, p21.
16 Guardian, 6 March 1973.
17 Intercontinental Press, 26 February 1973, p220.
18 J L Talmon in Laqueur (ed), op cit, p323.
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